Preachers by Night

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Preachers by Night

The Waldensian Barbes (15th–16th Centuries)

by
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Translated by
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PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

In fond memory of my colleagues
G. Gonnet (I) and A. Molnar (Cz)

To my Colleagues
M. Benedetti (I), P. Biller (GB), A. de Lange (NL)
J.-F. Gilmont (B), T. Kiefner (D), G. Merlo (I),
A. Patchovsky (D), B. Roussel (F), K.-V. Selge (D)
and K. Utz Tremp (CH),
members of the "Waldensian International",
part of the "Universitas Academica",
where debates, always finely focused on ideas,
were stimulating and congenial, even if sometimes sharp.

Mieulx vaut servir pour bien avoyr
Que estre mestre et rien savoyr . . .
Ne dézire point grant avoyr
Mays dézire de bien savoyr.
(Waldensian Manuscript,
Cambridge University Library,
Ms Dd 15.33, f° 96)

Quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur
Thomas of Aquinas

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FOREWORD

The following rules and guidelines have been adopted for the present work:

Place names are given in their present-day form and not as they were found in sources, where they were often written in Latin, or reflected the geographical or linguistic divisions of the era, when frontiers were sometimes tenuous and the dialects have in some cases long-since disappeared.

People's names have been anglicised only when a convention existed, otherwise the native forms have been preferred. Accents have been maintained in widely known languages such as French, German and Italian. Nevertheless, certain names will be encountered in more than one form; this is merely to reflect the fact that the spatio-temporal world being explored is very much a plurilingual one. In the western wing of the Waldensian diaspora alone, for instance, original documents were written in French, *langue-d'oc* and Latin, to which must be added the published sources in French, English, German and Italian; each language has so far adopted its own notions of standardization.

Biblical references are taken from the King James Bible (1611).

References to scholarly works are given in footnotes; the reference is given in full when works or articles are first cited in each chapter. Thereafter, the abbreviated form may be given just with the mention "op. cit.".

The bibliography is intended as a practical, working source of reference, and should in no way be considered exhaustive. Only works referred to directly are included. On the barbes, however, the bibliography is complete. For works dealing more generally with the Waldensians, the reader should consult the more recent synoptic studies listed at the end, where fuller bibliographies can be found.

The translation of the French text into English is by Claire Davison. I here address my warmest thanks to my colleague, who undertook the delicate task with enthusiasm, and in so doing extended an enriching collaboration. She has not only proved her double competence in linguistic and historical matters, but has been willing to go beyond her role as a translator, reacting to the text and sometimes enriching it with her perceptive suggestions.

ILLUSTRATIONS

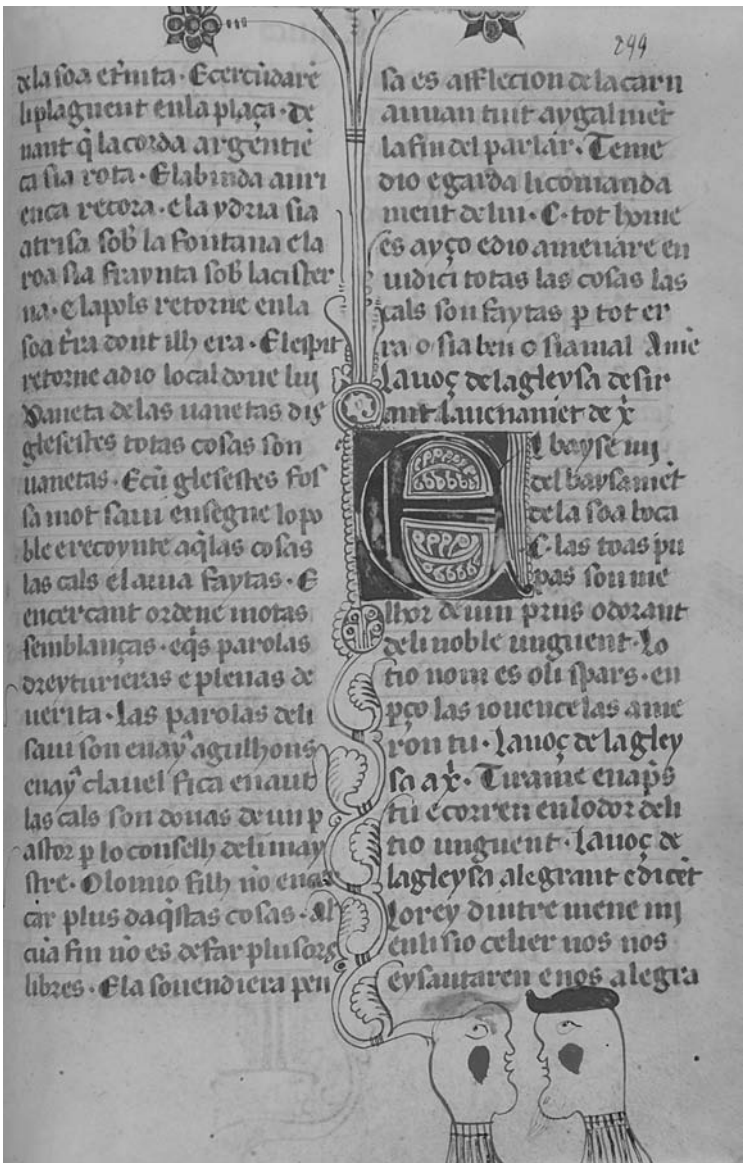


Figure 1. Waldensian Bible from Carpentras

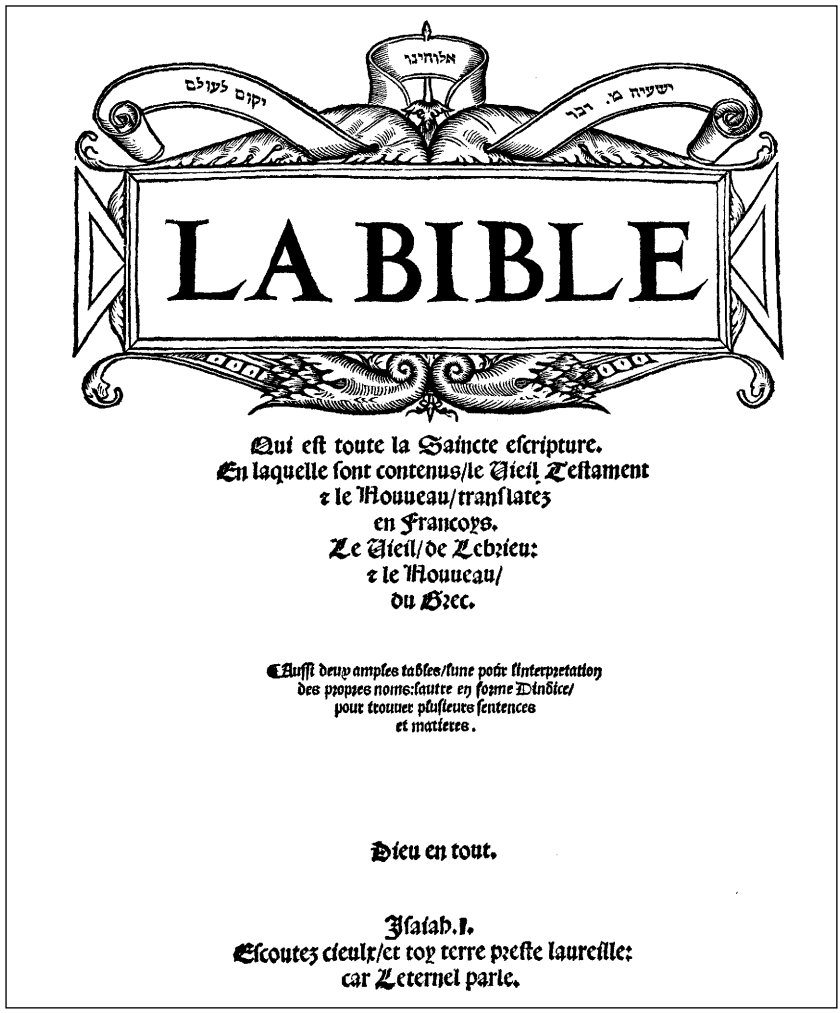
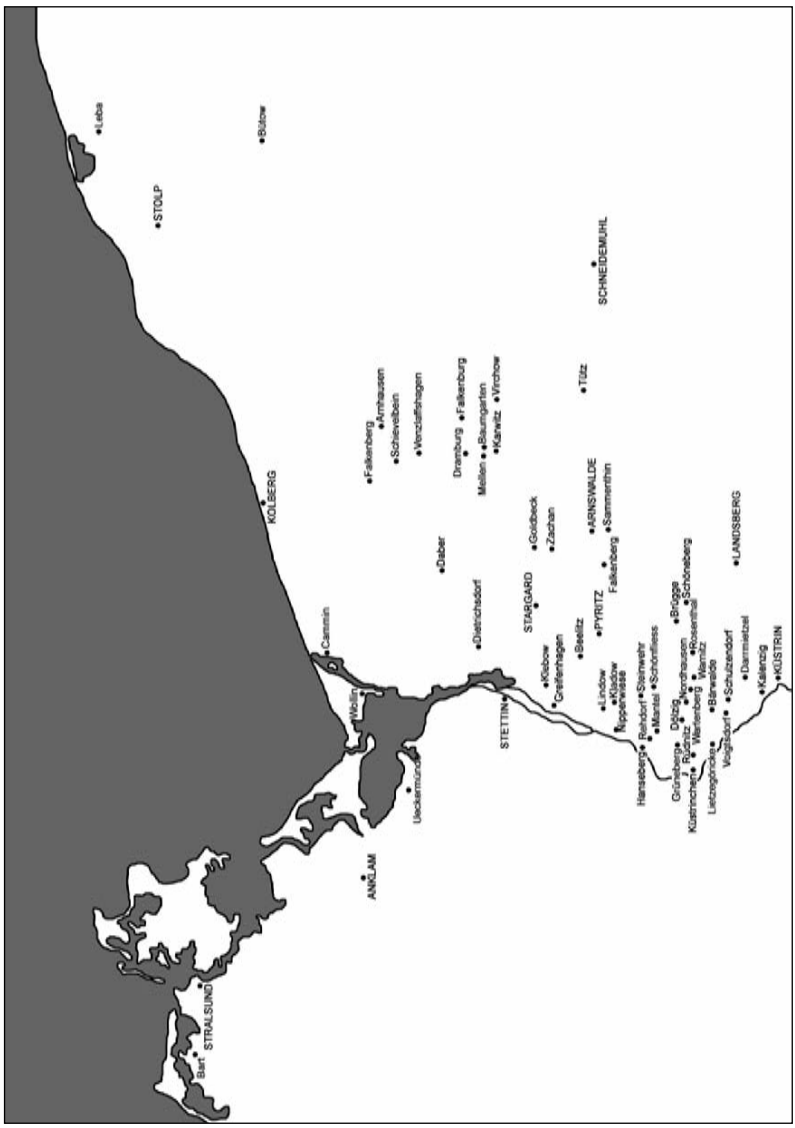
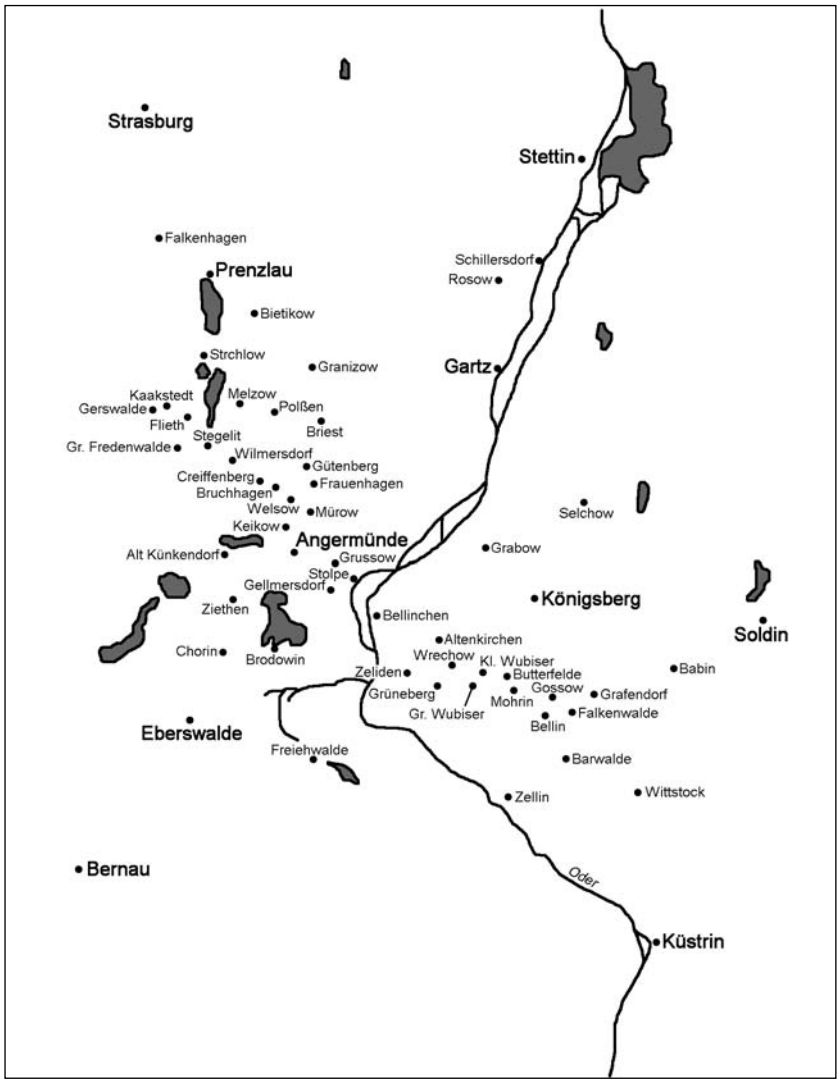


Figure 2. Bible d'Olivétan



Map 1. Waldensians in Pommerania



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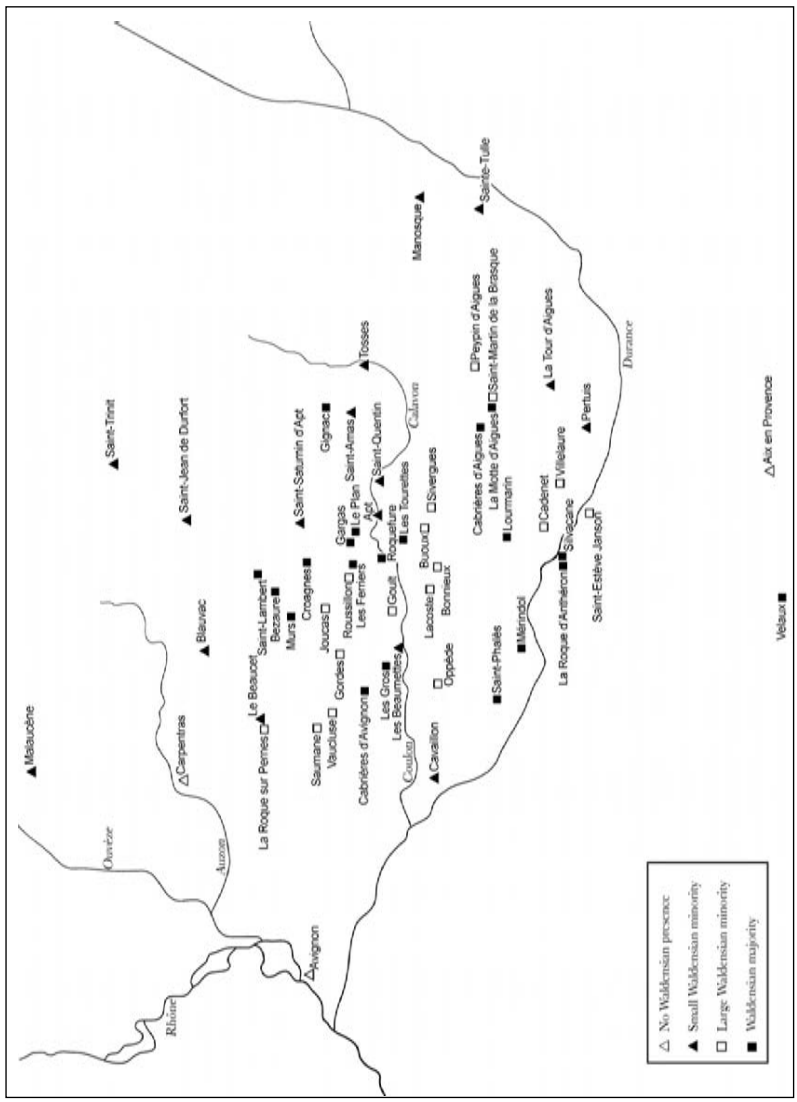
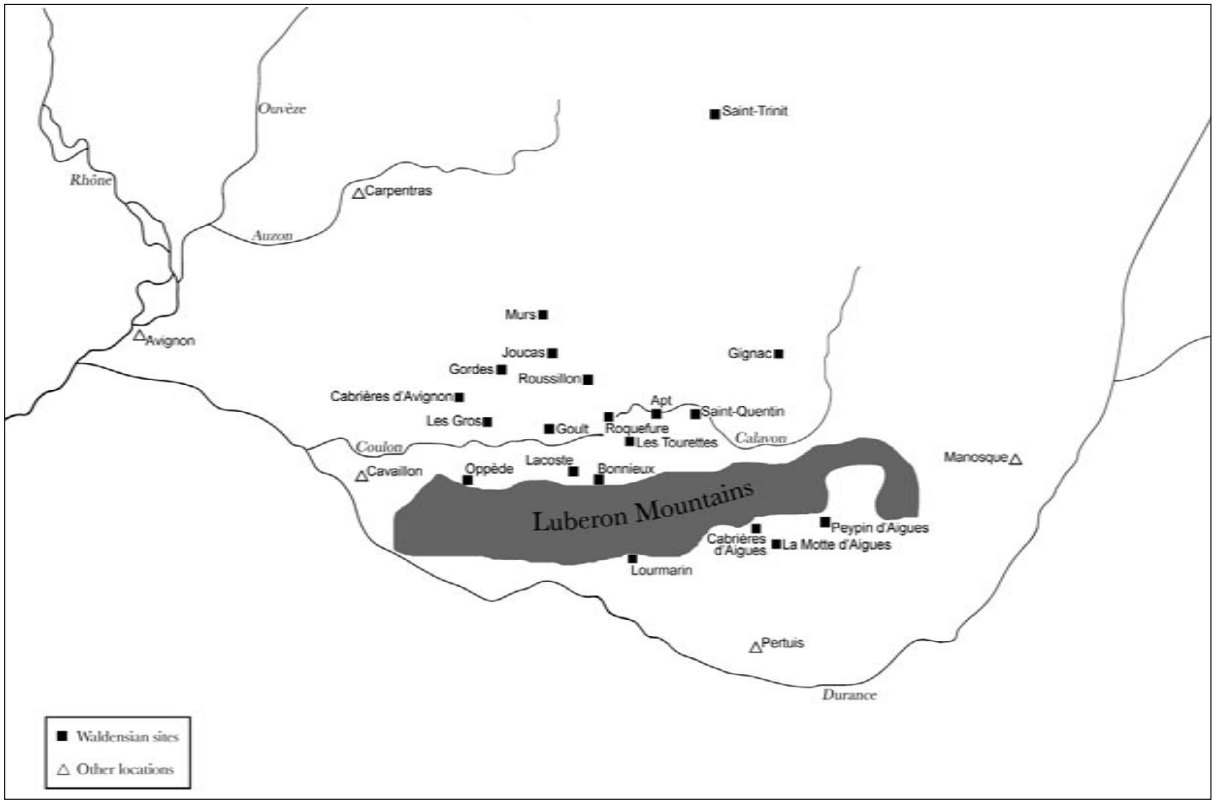
Map 3. Waldensian Piedmont



Map 4. The Waldensian Luberon



Map 5. Waldensians in Luberon according to P. Griot

INTRODUCTION

THE WAY AHEAD

To delve into the Waldensian past is to embark on an adventure. In many ways indeed, the journey back in time resembles a journey in space; the further you go, the more effort is needed to adapt. For this reason, the historian's approach must be like that of an ethnologist, enabling him to understand the society he is studying, steering clear of the temptation to read his own values into it, in whatever domain. Anachronisms must be avoided throughout, for they obstruct understanding. In this frame of mind I invite the reader to set out with me to encounter the Waldensians and their preachers.

The "Poor of Lyons" or "Poor of Christ", known to their detractors as the "Waldensians" or the "Waldenses",[1] represent the only medieval religious dissent, the only "heresy" as the Roman Church termed it, to have endured pursuit and persecution for centuries and to have survived until the threshold of modern times. Such remarkable, even exceptional longevity demands an explanation. The present volume is not intended as another history of the Waldensians, for this has already been undertaken many times, including by myself.[2] It will focus rather on the body of preachers. The Waldensian community as a whole will be evoked only insofar as it sheds indispensable light on these men who devoted their lives to its service.

Between the twelfth century, when they first emerged, and the sixteenth, when they joined the Reformation, the Waldensian community was inevitably evolving, which in itself could be problematic. This gradual evolution marked them lastingly, so that certain traits, once established, became real characteristics of the dissent. Sometimes,

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[1] Historiographers in the English-speaking world use both forms of the word, "Waldenses" and "Waldensians" which are perfectly equivalent. It is the latter form that is retained here on account of its proximity with the Latin adjectif, "Valdesianus," in the earliest sources referring to Vaudès' disciples.

[2] G. Audisio, *The Waldensian Dissent: Persecution and Survival, c. 1170–c. 1570*, Cambridge, CUP, 1999.

these can go some way in explaining how and why the Waldensian dissent survived so long. Thus clandestinity became not only a tradition but a cultivated choice; from being a makeshift ploy, it changed progressively into a way of life. There is no doubting the fact that the art of dissimulation thus acquired, adopted precisely so as to ensure the group's survival, proved highly efficient as time, centuries, went by. The dissent's survival, however, cannot be put down simply to this.

Proved time and again, in all sorts of domains, there is no continuance without organisation. This notion was doubtless far from the minds of the first "Waldensian society", who set great store by their egalitarian framework and even frame of mind. Progressively, however, and inevitably, a structure became necessary. If the community wanted to withstand the work of time, if only to pass on the flame of truth which had been granted them, they had to find some way to form a structure which alone could guarantee unity in space as well as in time: in space because the dissent became a diaspora; in time because, if they were destined to last, there were practical considerations to be borne in mind that would ensure this continuity.

Judging from the various documents available, there was a series of variations in the forms of Waldensian organisation, as we shall subsequently see. In the end, as it reached what was to prove the last period in their history, the Waldensian community had established a functional structure based on a collegial but simple hierarchy. Although there was nothing essentially original about this type of organisation, which could be observed in various other dissenting Christian groups, it left such a mark on the Waldensians that, for a long while after the last of their preachers had disappeared, having gone over to Protestantism, the name given to these preachers lingered on, becoming the name by which the whole community was known.[3]

It is evident that the preachers cut striking figures in the community. This was not so much on account of their individual personalities or learning, although this was certainly the case for some of them as we shall see later, but because of the lives they led and

[3] I believe E. Cameron to be mistaken when he claims, "The barbes, as far as we can see, played a rather subordinate part." (E. Cameron, *The Reformation of the Heretics,* Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984, p. 254.)

their status which guaranteed them esteem and authority within the community, while inspiring suspicion and hostility beyond. Outside, they represented choice targets for those engaged in repressing the heresy, in keeping with the logic that prevailed in a society where hierarchy as a guiding principle was not only admitted but defended and justified by all; eliminating the heresiarchs, that is to say the leaders and figureheads of the heresy, was the surest way to wipe out the heresy itself, just as the sheep were condemned to perish without their shepherd.

It was musing upon such thoughts as these that prompted me to devote a book to these men, who sacrificed their lives to an ideal, leading meagre lives in many respects. If they were out of keeping with their own era, how much stranger do they appear to our eyes on account of their high-minded demands, so pitiful in their human failings, and so fascinating caught between the paradoxical grips of their followers' reverent awe and their own personal weaknesses or short-comings. The Waldensians did not choose an elite to muster their forces, at least not a social elite as tended to be the case then, as it still does today.

I thus invite you to join me in the traces of these intrepid preachers of the night. The path is unequal, often tenuous, as if these men had taken pains not only to slip through their own times unnoticed but also to escape from our scrutiny. Knowing quite how to look is an indispensable and worthy asset in itself; actually managing to see is another matter, and not everybody succeeds for it means casting aside prejudices in the desire to understand, and requires the courage to uncover and perhaps tackle the unknown. But what discoveries, what pleasures are in store for those travellers who reach their destination, and who, arriving at the summit, can cast their eyes back across the realms they have covered, the heights they have achieved and assess how far they have come, marking a victory over the landscape of course, but more importantly a remarkable feat in terms of self-transcendence.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DAWN OF A SECT

My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Neither are your ways my ways.
Isaiah 55, 8

Birth

First and foremost, the historian must be capable of succumbing to astonishment. There is nothing so very banal or so self-evident about being astonished by the events of the past, for this presupposes not being fatalistic, not presuming that because a particular event happened, it necessarily had to be so. How did it happen? Why? Mulling over such questions, giving in to such curiosity, is the guiding principle of historical inquiry. It was not preordained that the Waldensians should appear. Later, nothing destined them to form what we call a dissent at the heart of Christianity, or to last so very long. For this first stage in our reflection, let us therefore ponder awhile on these first, hesitant, tentative beginnings, the possible repercussions of which no one then could have suspected, not even the instigator, in fact him least of all.

A Man called Vaudès

In the beginning, we find Vaudès. If it is quite usual to find one founding figure at the origin of a sect, what is striking in the case of the Waldensians is that the founder remains in the shadows, despite enquiry and research intended to bring him to light. Even his first name is unknown to us, for it was not until the 14th century that he is first referred to as "Peter". Since the considerable vagueness surrounding the man dates back so far, doubtless he himself wished things this way. This can be understood better by turning to the source of the initial inspiration, which gave a first overall sense to the initiative. Everything began in Lyons in around 1170. A rich

inhabitant of the city on the river Rhône, a certain Valdès or Vaudès who may or may not have been a merchant, was struck by passages from the Gospels which spoke out in favour of poverty. The words of Christ are indeed powerful, and even today should prompt many a Christian to stop and think, and even to change their lifestyle. On the other hand, it is equally possible that having been interpreted and adapted for one thousand years, the Word of God was quite simply distorted beyond recognition. Whatever the case, Vaudès decided to apply Christ's words to the letter. He commissioned translations into Franco-Provençal of certain books from the New Testament, became a beggar and began preaching and reading the Scriptures in the local tongue.

Before going any further, it is worth bearing in mind what this first Waldensian initiative really meant, for it proved both the wellhead and the bedrock of the movement to come.[1] For years, specialists clashed swords trying to establish which came first, poverty or preaching. Some, doubtless the more conciliatory wing, tried to find a compromise suggesting both came together. My own belief is that Vaudès' first step, which was later taken up by his disciples, was to return quite simply to the Word of God, which was heard and applied *stricto sensu*. I believe it was the contrast, and even the contradiction, between what the Gospels said and the way it was put into practice, by the clergy in particular, that triggered the reaction, used here in both senses of the term: a reply and a return to the past. This would imply that the basis of the "Waldensian protest" was, as was the case for Christianity innumerable times over the centuries, a form of "evangelism".

It is a fact that most dissenting Christian movements justified their objections to and their protests against the Church of Rome by calling up the Scriptures, so as to stigmatise the deviations and distortions that had come about over the centuries, compared to the simple purity of the original message and the first community of believers, the ideal "primitive Church". Thus, from the beginning, Vaudès and his adepts claimed that the Word should be applied to the letter.

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[1] On the Lyonnese context of the first Poor of Lyons, see Michel Rubellin, "Guichard de Pontigny et Valdès à Lyon: la rencontre de deux idéaux réformateurs", in *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, vol. 217, n. 1, Jan.–March 2000, pp. 39–58; see too "Lyon et Valdès: un réexamen", in G. Audisio (ed.), *Religion et exclusion*, Aix-en-Provence, Publications de l'Université de Provence, 2001, pp. 51–60.

This literalism relied on a rather crude logic, intellectually speaking, for it meant refusing all interpretations, all adaptations, even those which were the fruit of centuries of reflection, discussion and debate. It was this will to adhere strictly to the text which was behind the two founding principles of the Waldensian community: poverty and preaching. Both issued directly from the words of Christ. Had his answer to the rich young man wishing to attain perfection not been, "go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven"? Had he not concluded, "Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19, 21–24)? Similarly, as his days on earth drew to an end, he had sent his disciples forth on their mission, saying, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark, 16, 15). These represented for Vaudès two all-important commands which, to his eyes, defined his mission: to throw off worldly goods, which he gave partly to his family, partly to the poor; and, having become a beggar, to set out to preach. These were the modest, even insignificant beginnings of a dissent which was to last nearly four hundred years.

It did not take Vaudès long to take the first step towards success, so to speak. While he was alone, a beggar and a preacher, he could quite possibly be seen as an eccentric, a free spirit; he would certainly not have been the first Christianity had known, some tolerated better than others, some even earning the respect of their communities. When a contestation is voiced by a single person, it has no chance of survival, for it will inevitably cease when its instigator dies. This was not the case. Within a short space of time, disciples were imitating and following Vaudès. In fact, it was this first "Valdesian" community, referred to in the Latin texts as a "societas valdesiana" that made it possible to trace back the name, Vaudès for the name has not been found other than in Latin, which was not of course the everyday language.[2]

These first companions of Vaudès joined with him to form a community that was remarkable in more ways than one. Fascinated by the instigator's personality, which must have been quite compelling,

[2] One of the very first documents to bear his name is Vaudès' "profession of faith", dating from around 1180, in which he states, "*ego Valdesius et omnes fratres mei*" [I, Vaudès and all my brothers]; see G. Gonnet, *Enchiridion fontium valdensium*, Torino, Claudiana, 1958, p. 32.

if only for the courage and determination he showed, changing his life so radically and giving up the ease and plenty that were his, they followed his example. Divesting themselves of their material goods, they began begging and preaching. The other, no less remarkable feature, considering the society of the time, was that their company was mixed. It must have been a shock indeed to the Lyons public to see women preaching in public on a par with men. Furthermore, both men and women belonged to the laity, prompting the question of whether it was lawful or not for them to preach in public. The question had not yet been settled, but it was generally held to be illicit, doubtless starting with the clerics who, rightly or wrongly, believed the monopoly over the Word to belong to them.

Thus, the first "Vaudesian" group emerged, bringing a new dimension to the matter. It was an auspicious start for those involved; for everyone else, and for the authorities in particular, it was more unsettling. In truth, there was no real concern to begin with: here was a group of people inciting Christians to live in poverty following the teachings of the Gospel. There was even less reason for the first preachers to feel concerned, seeing that the bishop at the time, Guichard, a Cistercian monk, was endeavouring to reform religious life, starting with the clergy, which earned him determined opposition from the chapter house. In such a context, Vaudès and his followers were more like allies of the local ecclesiastical authorities, and while they could not pass unnoticed, they were not hampered in the slightest. How could they worry the authorities? This doubtless explains why we have so little information concerning them.

Nevertheless, they formed a specific, recognisable group which was referred to in a particular way. By which designation were the first members known? No one can doubt the importance of naming. And how did the people concerned, Vaudès' companions, refer to themselves? The name they chose was "the Poor of Christ" or "the Poor of Lyons". This was not, however, the name that went down in history, where they were known as the "Waldensians". Alain of Lille, for example, a Cistercian monk and a Professor from Paris and Montpellier universities, included in a treatise dated around 1200–1202 a chapter entitled "Against the Waldensians" in which he explained, "They are called Waldenses, after their heresiarch who was called Waldus."[3] The name is obviously not neutral. It stigmatises the Poor

[3] Alain of Lille (Alanus de Insulis), "De fide catholica contra hæreticos de sui

of Lyons as disciples of Vaudès, followers of a man, not of Christ, which made them dissenters, sectaries or even sectarians.

The term "sect", however, should be used with caution, to avoid falling once again into anachronism. Contrary to what received ideas and the modern sense of the term would have us believe, a "sect" long designated a line of conduct; in politics a line, a tendency, a faction; a lifestyle; and even, in philosophy, an intellectual system, the School of thought as in the School of Athens or the School of Alexandria. It was devoid of pejorative connotations, deriving from the Latin "sequor" (to follow) and not, as false and misleading etymology might have us believe, from "secare" (to cut).[4] While the term did quite rapidly come to mean dissent or heresy, it also kept its initial meaning throughout the middle ages, and could still be found in the sixteenth century. This explains why the Waldensians, during the inquisitorial trials for example, can be found speaking of their "sect". At a relatively late date, for instance—for the trial took place in 1532—, the fact that the inquisitor employed the term six times during interrogations hardly comes as a surprise; what is more astonishing is that the suspect, a young Waldensian preacher called Pierre Griot to whom we shall be returning later, also uses the term eight times, quite spontaneously, when evoking the dissent to which he belonged. Had the word had only a negative connotation, as when it issues from the mouth of the inquisitor, the preacher would have avoided it.[5] At the same time, the Dominican does also utter the expression, "Poor of Lyons", by which the Waldensians referred to themselves, and which was employed in the early years, to designate them, including in official documents issued by the Roman Church.[6]

The fact that the Church's growing, flourishing wealth was more and more frequently being questioned and decried, prompting

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temporis", in G. Gonnet, *Enchiridion fontium valdensium*, Torino, Claudiana, 1958, p. 103: *Hi Waldenses dicuntur, a suo haeresiarcha, qui vocabatur Waldus.*

[4] P. Boulhol, "*Secta*: de la ligne de conduite au groupe hétérodoxe. Évolution sémantique jusqu'au début du Moyen Âge," *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, v. 219, n. 1, Jan-March 2002, pp. 5–33.

[5] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur. Procès du barbe vaudois Pierre Griot par l'inquisiteur Jean de Roma (Apt, 1532)*, Aix-en-Provence, Edisud, 1979, ff° 182–183 v°, 184 v°–185, 220 v°, 222.

[6] *Ibid.*, f° 220 v°–221. The Council of Verona, in 1184, condemned the *pauperes de Lugduno*: G. Gonnet, *Enchiridion fontium valdensium*, Torino, Claudiana, 1958, p. 51.

Christians to rise up in defence of poverty, was not a minor issue. At that time, however, the model so far had been that of Saint Martin. The story of the Roman soldier, who, when yet a catechumen, divided his cloak in two, one icy winter's day, to give one half to a poor man shivering at the gates of Amiens, was well-known.[7] The example of his poverty had lasted through the centuries, from the fifth to the twelfth. But what lesson did it teach exactly? Only that one should help the poor, for Martin had not given his mantle, he had merely shared it. One can even go one step farther. The implicit moral to be drawn could be: Gain wealth so as to give alms to beggars.

The turning point brought about by Vaudès and his followers was significant indeed. It was even an about-turn in terms of moral values. Henceforth the message became: Be poor yourself. Something quite different was being required. As we know, every era approaches the teachings of Christ in its own way, and thus develops its own reading of the sacred texts. In the course of a little under half a century, between 1170 and 1216, three major voices originating in the three Latin countries rose up to appeal for poverty in western Christendom: the Frenchman Vaudès, the Italian Francis of Assisi and the Spaniard Domingo de Guzman. The two latter each founded a mendicant religious order, the Franciscans and the Dominicans, and were later canonized by the Church of Rome, while the group from Lyons were cast out as heretics. It is worth noting that the originality of the "mendicant orders" lay in their preaching in favour of begging, in other words poverty. Vaudès and his companions, however, by choosing not to adopt a monastic pattern, opted to remain laymen; therein doubtless lies their specificity, but it was also to be at the root of their exclusion.

Persecution

For a whole series of reasons that cannot be entered into here, the Waldensians, for that is how they came to be known whether they liked it or not, and that is the name that lasted, gradually became marginalised before being openly condemned. The main obstacle, as

[7] The story was recorded before the saint's death in 400: Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de saint Martin*, ch. 3.

might be expected, was not so much their poverty but their preaching. The stakes were high, as time would show. To be more precise, as I mentioned above, and as was borne out by the work of André Vauchez devoted to medieval sainthood, the Roman hierarchy had yet to settle the question of lay preaching: could laymen preach, or were clerics alone entitled to assume this public function?[8] When Jean de Belles Mains succeeded Guichard at the episcopal see, the situation changed course. The new bishop was partial to the chapter to whom he owed his election. Less partial to clerical reform, he wished to bring the Waldensians back into line. Henceforth no one could preach in a diocese except on the authority of the bishop. A double refusal led directly to a crisis-point: the bishop refused to let the Waldensians continue preaching, while they refused to listen, choosing to pursue their mission, thereby showing that they considered their vocation more important than the duty to obey. In 1184, the pope Lucius III declared them "schismatic" for having usurped the ministry of preaching without a mission, which the emperor Frederick Barberossa confirmed.[9] The Waldensians were henceforth officially excommunicated, rejected by the Christian community. We should note, however, that at this point they were being condemned for disobedience towards the ecclesiastical authorities, not for deviation from doctrine.

This situation went on for the next thirty years or so, both stable and ambiguous. The preachers were marginalised, having been condemned, which paradoxically encouraged them to expand outside the diocese of Lyons, yet at the same time they were popular, for the simple lives they led were in keeping with their word, which won them the approval of their followers. While there are no documents shedding light on what really took place, beyond the fact that they gradually spread towards Lorraine, Alsace, Italy and the south-west of France, relations between the Waldensians and the ecclesiastical authorities would seem to have gone on in the same way, never improving, never deteriorating. As for the internal evolution of the Waldensian community, their expansion could not fail,

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[8] A. Vauchez, *La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age (1198–1431)*, Rome, Ecole Française de Rome, 1981.

[9] G. Gonnet, *Enchiridion fontium valdensium*, Torino, Claudiana, 1958, p. 51: the document refers to them as *humiliatos vel pauperes de Lugduno*.

sooner or later, to create problems, and this indeed seems to be the case from 1200, although we have no need to elaborate on this here. Suffice it to say that the situation was curious, to say the least, for we find excommunicated preachers who are neither falling back in line, nor are they being checked and certainly not wiped out. Things became stranger still after the condemnation which occurred some fifteen years later.

It was during the fourth Lateran council in Rome in 1215 that all those found preaching without express authorisation of the apostolic see or the bishop were condemned; there is no doubting that the Poor of Lyons were included in the mass of those who, while "forbidden or not sent out to do so", had been claiming the right to preach. Furthermore, although the Waldensians are not mentioned by name, just as no others are, canon 3, entitled *De haereticis* [Of Heretics] does condemn all those who had already been found guilty in the rescript of 1184, whose general structure and terms it takes up. This meant the Waldensians were now condemned not just as schismatics but as heretics, in other words deviating from the faith.[10]

Divergences appeared and spread within the Waldensian community, although there is little detail to go by. Certain groups, the "Poor Catholics", returned to the embrace of Rome, while others opted for increasingly radical positions on the question of the baptism of children, the Eucharist and purgatory.[11] Thus, little by little, the course of those referred to by their adversaries under the umbrella-term "Waldensians" irrespective of the various divergences in their opinions, led them away from the path of Rome. The Waldensians thus became heretics, answerable to the Inquisition, an exceptional jurisdiction newly created to stamp out heresies. Although the Waldensians had long been tolerated, for they had proved particularly efficient in the fight against the Cathars in the south-west of France, the first judicial procedures against them, of which we have

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[10] G. Gonnet, *Enchiridion fontium valdensium*, Torino, Claudiana, 1958, pp. 160–163.

[11] The denial of purgatory later became one of the Waldensians' characteristics; nevertheless, even if this doctrine was established by Parisian theologians in the 11th century, it was not until the pontifical declaration of 1254 and the Council of Lyons II in 1274 that the existence of purgatory was first officially proclaimed, the word itself figuring in the Roman document but not in the conciliar text. (J. Le Goff, *La naissance du purgatoire*, Paris, Gallimard, 1981, pp. 379–383).

trace, began in about 1230, once the Cathar issue had been settled by the treaty of Meaux-Paris in 1229.[12]

The condemnation issued by Rome, and more importantly no doubt, the first legal pursuits against the Waldensians, led to major and lasting changes in the community of the Poor of Lyons. Indeed, hounded by lay and religious authorities alike, although not consistently nor with the same conviction in different places, they had to adapt to this situation having chosen *not* to return to Rome, but also *not* to finish as martyrs but rather to ensure the survival of their dissent which they deemed the pure word of the Gospel countering the deviations taken by Rome. No document has survived which expresses this double position which they may well have adopted solemnly, as a community; we can only surmise that this was the case, judging by practices and attitudes the Waldensians came to favour. Adapting to survive meant first and foremost dispersing, as members scattered. Quite rapidly, in fact, the first groups of preachers set out from Lyons into the surrounding area and then towards the south-west, but not as a result of constraint. In this region, they had acquired a reputation as efficient preachers against the Cathars alongside the Roman authorities. From the early thirteenth century, Waldensians had settled in the Quercy and Albigeois regions. In Montauban, for example, of the 200 heretics cited in 1241, 80 of them, or 40%, were Waldensians. In the same era, the Waldensians had spread to reach northern Italy, Burgundy, and Lotharingia, on the fringes of Germanic Europe. Once the Cathar question had been settled, and the Waldensian "witch-hunt" had begun, it was towards the east that the Waldensians began setting out.

Community

In the latter half of the thirteenth century and the early fourteenth, there is an increasing number of traces attesting the Waldensian presence in the Germanic world. They are to be found in Rhineland, Trier, Bavaria, in Austria where, in the diocese of Passau alone, at

[12] In about 1240, inhabitants from south-west France were charged with Waldensian heresy by the Inquisition. One of the accused, interrogated in 1244, claimed persecution against them had begun fifteen or sixteen years previously (M. Schneider, *Europäisches Waldensertum im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1981, p. 10.

least forty parishes counted members of the Poor of Lyons among their numbers in 1260. Thereafter they reached Thuringia, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Brandenburg, Pomerania and Poland. In the early fourteenth century, Waldensians stood trial in Prague, Vienna, Breslau and Stettin. In other words, in a little more than a century, the Poor of Lyons had reached as far as the limits of Europe and could henceforth be referred to as a diaspora.

The second characteristic of the dissent was its socio-professional homogeneity. One might say the Waldensians began life as urban dwellers. There is nothing surprising about this considering they were beggars, for where better to find alms enough to survive than in the cities which offered both a concentrated population and disposable wealth?[13] While the Waldensians may have begun to disperse even before legal pursuits, however, this branching out grew in strength and changed in nature after the condemnation and as the Inquisition set in. Little by little, the Waldensians scattered, then settled, across the countryside. This was because the surveillance networks set up by the different authorities were far more tenuous in the villages than in the towns. Of course urban households did survive right up until the fifteenth century, but these were isolated minorities in the community at large, the last in line of an ancestral situation.[14] Thus, having started out as town-dwellers, the Waldensians became rural, a feature which remained a characteristic of their community until the end.

This ruralisation was clearly intended to help them evade pursuit and to slip more imperceptibly through the net of persecution; it was part and parcel of the progressive movement towards clandestinity. We should take stock of the contradiction inherent in this tendency for Christians whose prime motivation, other than poverty, was the will to preach. How can you preach in clandestinity? This was the paradox they had to resolve, the challenge they had to meet. As time went by, and as circumstances dictated, the Waldensians

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[13] J. Le Goff underlined this aspect of the question in his study "Ordres mendiants et urbanisation de la France médiévale. État de l'enquête", *Annales Économie Société Civilisations*, 1970, n. 4, pp. 924–946.

[14] For a study of Marseilles, see M. Villard, "Vaudois marseillais au XIII^{e} siècle," *Provence Historique*, n. 126, oct.–nov. 1981, pp. 341–354; for Freiburg in Switzerland, K. Utz Tremp, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Waldenser von Freiburg im Üchtland (1399–1439)*, Hanover, Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2000.

invented the art of living their dissent in hiding, which implied finding a lasting balance, over years and generations, between secretly held convictions and some form of outward accommodation with practices in the world outside, no doubt in part, but at least sufficiently convincing to deflect suspicion. Three elements can be directly linked back to their settling in rural areas and to the shift into a clandestine way of life. First, wishing to mingle with those around them, the Waldensians became country folk, no longer begging or even bound to strict poverty; similarly they gave up their mission to preach, at least for a majority of them. As a result they could no longer count on conversion to swell their numbers; their faith was passed on within the family, as a bloodline. The Waldensian community thus turned inwards upon itself. One of the best signs of this is the practice of endogamy, as the Waldensians married members of their community, a guarantee of both their continuity, and their security. As time went by, however, such an attitude, deliberating excluding outsiders, could not go unnoticed in the rural world where everyone knows everything about everyone. This characteristic, which became a permanent feature, lasted right up until the end of the period, but it did not escape the eyes of justice. The inquisitor Jean de Roma had reported it and the *Parlement* of Provence, in its accounts to the king, followed his advice on this point as on so many others.[15]

Finally, the last condition of survival was organisation. The realities of the diaspora, extending across Europe, and the will to hand their faith on to future generations, inevitably led the Waldensian community, like any other in a comparable situation, to set up an organisation capable of solving the double-edged dilemma which grew more acute as the years slipped by: how to cope with their dispersion in space and withstand erosion in time. The challenge was considerable. What was at stake was the Waldensian identity and how to conserve it—a seemingly unfeasible quest when living

[15] National Archives, Paris, J 851, n. 2, f° 164, published by G. Audisio, "Le rapport des commissaires du roi sur les vaudois (Aix-en-Provence, 1533)," in *I Valdesi e l'Europa*, Torre Pellice, 1982, pp. 137–150, p. 149: «Item ilz ont entre eulx plusieurs choses secrectes, entre autres qu'ilz ne marient jamays leurs filles que à ceulx de leur secte et ne font point de leurs enfans presbtres.» [Item, they have several secret things they uphold, among which the fact that they only let their daughters marry members of their sect, and do not permit their children to become priests].

clandestinely—, while also maintaining unity, another feat in itself when the community was so far-flung. Their hesitations about how best to proceed can be seen in the doubts expressed and the variations adopted within the organisation which evolved for over two centuries.

From when can we date this need for organisation? In other words, at which moment did the community of the Poor of Lyons reach this cultural turning point? The point when they deemed that it was better to last than to burn? That it was more important to assure their spiritual descendance and transmit their flame of truth, and to do so to establish a working structure? We have no clear answer. It may well have been when the death of the founder was faced or envisaged, thus posing the problem of the future. But we do not know when Vaudès died; we only have reason to suppose it was at the beginning of the thirteenth century. What we do know is that the community decided to get organised so as better to transmit their message, to ensure their testimony would last, in a word to guarantee the Waldensian succession. From this point, which doubtless came about quite early, we can situate a first and decisive watershed: the Poor of Lyons decided that to live on, they had to get organised.

From Inspiration to Organisation

In the early days, Vaudès' disciples had no need of a hierarchy amongst themselves. The founder's natural authority was doubtless in itself sufficient to ensure coordination and coherence within the small community, which was in all probability extremely informal. Little is known concerning this first period, during Vaudès' lifetime. All we know is that the first Waldensians were men and women, all poor, beggars, preachers, and all, apparently, from the laity.

A warm, fraternal atmosphere doubtless reigned in this early community, despite occasional rifts and tensions that are inevitable in any human group. But these fellows were firmly linked together by their prophetic mission to adopt evangelical poverty and preach the Word of God. When the excommunication of Verona fell in 1184, a good number of the Poor of Lyons must have been surprised, then scandalised. After all, a delegation, headed perhaps by Vaudès himself had been to Rome in 1179 during the third Lateran Council to

present their case. Hadn't this been examined and approved on both counts, poverty and preaching, so long as the bishop gave his approval, admittedly? The pope Alexander III was even said to have kissed Vaudès, having been so moved by the man's saintliness. As far as the Waldensians were concerned, if the licence to preach was later withheld, it was the Archbishop of Lyons who was in the wrong. We cannot fully understand their attitude without bearing in mind the overwhelming certitude they had of being invested with a divine mission, thus setting them above decisions taken by man. When the condemnation was confirmed by the fourth Lateran Council in 1215, they were no less convinced of being in the right. Their adamant determination to carry through their mission and abide by the Gospels to the letter prompted them to take as their own the proud reply made by Peter and the apostles: "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5, 29) If they were God's chosen few, they could not give up their mission, not at any price, however much they might have wished to do so.

The Poor of Lyons

The first groups of preachers, thriving on the new-found zeal inspired by the initial impetus, bursting with the ardent energy of recent conversion, calling themselves, and soon called, the "Poor of Lyons" or the "Poor of Christ", set off begging and preaching poverty, thus applying the words of the Gospel in the most concrete and literal of ways.

It would not have taken long for such raggle-taggle preachers to get noticed. The first thing that struck the eye of course was their very real, undisguised poverty. As they walked the streets of Lyons, they could easily be spotted, by a former neighbour, a friend, a relative. They were far from being unknown vagrants; some of them at least, such as Vaudès himself had, until recently, been figures of respect, householders, pillars of the community. They had chosen to be poor; their poverty had not been foisted on them by fate or ill-luck. It was as surprising then as it is today. The disciples' conversion can doubtless be attributed mostly to the personality of Vaudès himself.

Beyond their poverty, other aspects too brought them to the attention of their contemporaries, as we saw above—preaching in the vernacular, for one, but also the sexual and social equality that

reigned among them. This is to say that in the first phase of their existence, the Poor of Christ were all equally entitled to speak the Word, men and women alike, and this rule was respected by each and every one of them.

Contemporary observers were astonished by the presence of women, which is not difficult to understand, when one considers the status of women in medieval society. Bernard Gui, echoing Etienne of Bourbon a century before, described the origins of the sect in the following terms:

> The man called Valdès or Valdo encouraged a number of accomplices of both sexes in this presumption, sending them out to preach as disciples. Although they were ignorant and unlettered, these people, both men and women, went from village to village, going into people's homes, preaching in public squares and even in churches, the men in particular, leaving behind them a host of misunderstandings and mistakes.[16]

This gave the more or less misogynistic clerics a welcome opportunity to pour scorn on the Poor of Lyons, seeing their promotion of women as yet another example of their outlandishness. This sexual equality, contrasting vividly with the male monopoly in the clergy and the respective status of the sexes in society at large, was, however, short-lived.

Women soon ceased to exercise their mission, and no mention is made of them in later documents. This is not to subscribe unblinkingly to the *a silentio* approach, which deems that lack of mention in itself bespeaks a lack of presence, for it can be misleading indeed as a historical method. In this instance, however, it would seem to be the case that women disappeared from the society of preachers. Even by the time Bernard Gui was writing at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the situation had evolved. When interrogated by Jacques Fournier, bishop of Pamiers, on January 8, 1320, Raymond of Costa declared, "Women may not preach the Word of God, nor may they take holy orders."[17] To promote laymen as preachers had the makings of a socially subversive issue, as did their evangelical

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[16] Bernard Gui, *Manuel de l'inquisiteur*, edited by G. Mollat, 2 v., Paris, 1964, v. 1, pp. 32–37.

[17] "Dixit quod quia mulieres non possunt predicare verbum Dei et non possunt recipere ordines presbiteratus, dyaconatus et maioralitatis", Jean Duvernoy, *Le registre d'inquisition de Jacques Fournier, 1318–1325*, 3 v., Toulouse, 1965, v. 1, p. 74.

literalism. To champion women as preachers was potentially explosive. Whether they were finally won over by traditional positions on this point, or whether its unacceptable originality made it too difficult to uphold, sexual equality was abandoned. It was in fact anachronistic and thus destined to failure.

Sexual equality in the first Waldensian community was more than a principle in itself; it was part of an underlying value-system. All were equal in the mission that had been conferred on them. It is worth stopping to consider what this implies. Since the French Revolution and the values it set out to uphold, the notion of equality has seemed quite indubitable. As the first article of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man proclaims, "Men are born, and remain free, and equal in rights. Social distinction can be founded only on common utility", axioms taken up in 1948 as the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While today's societies lament the passing of their "roots", and with them, values of old which were formerly upheld by the community at large, it is worth remembering that equality is, at least in theory and in official terms, no longer questioned; it is even perhaps one of our most unchallengeable precepts.

It therefore requires quite a feat of imagination to understand a society founded, with the implicit or explicit consent of everyone, on inequality. Everything was conceived within a theological vision of the world. At the summit, uncontested, incontestable, was God, who in his oneness was also a trinity; if the divine triune was equal in terms of dogma, it was nonetheless a hierarchical threesome in people's minds, evoked always in the same order: first God the father, then the Son, then the Holy Spirit. The whole of creation was thereafter organised according to the will of God, thus ensuring an overall cohesion. The after-life was divided into the three hierarchically ordered realms of paradise, purgatory and hell. A fourth domain, limbo, a later addition to the series, had a rather hazy status that troubled theologians and worshippers alike. Paradise was made up of carefully ranked beings: angels (who were themselves divided into seven classes); then saints, with the Virgin Mary at their head and a precise order of saints beneath. Similarly even hell itself was strictly organised, with Satan ruling over a successive order of evil powers and the damned.

It follows that earth too should be hierarchically organised. This was admittedly a contentious issue. While all agreed that prime of

place on earth be given to the pope, the Vicar of Christ, opinions differed amongst jurists in particular over who came next. Which place devolved to the emperor and to kings? Beyond this, the traditional, hierarchical, three-part division of society into clerics, soldiers and peasantry was well established. Within these estates, each had a precise place, according to what he did in society and what God had chosen for him. God was good and had ordained what was best for each person. And since He was also omniscient, the resulting social order could but be immutable. This hierarchical vision applied everywhere: to the cosmos, to the human body, to nature. Nor was the family exempt from this order of things. There was an uncontested head in the family, in the local community, the town and the province; the Church and the State, trades and society as a whole were seen as, and functioned as, hierarchical bodies.

In such a context, where a strict hierarchical vision was shared by scholars and common folk alike, any inkling of egalitarianism was simply revolutionary. Concerning the first 'Waldensian society', Vaudès himself insisted that there be no leader. This was a moot point between the Poor of Lyons and the Lombardy Poor, debated during the meeting in Bergamo in 1218. It was a position which threatened the survival of the entire group, for without structures it was impossible to pass the faith on.

The changes which came about in the thirteenth century constituted answers to practical issues they were facing. If the movement wanted to survive beyond the first sparks of inspiration, to guarantee the unity of a community that had become a diaspora and to meet the challenge of forced clandestinity, it had to agree on some form of organisation. The Poor of Lyons lost certain, remarkably subversive traits by opting to ensure their future. Their evangelism had troubled the Christian authorities by showing them how they could be challenged by the Word of God, claim as they might to apply it, and to demand obedience in its name. Over the centuries, the Poor of Lyons could only uphold poverty, itinerancy and their preaching mission by making inevitable concessions. Amongst these was the noble but unmanageable principle of equality both between men and women and amongst members of the community; this had to be given up. In the beginning, brethren, preachers, Poor of Lyons, Poor of Christ, devotees and believers were on a par; these were but synonymous terms denoting the members of the dissenting community. In the century following the birth of the Waldensian move-

ment, profound changes took place, foremost amongst which was the adoption of a clear hierarchy.

The Masters

It was doubtless during the thirteenth century, although at which point we can only surmise, that a distinction grew up within the Waldensian community, breaking with the original notion of overall equality. The first modification enabling a hierarchy to be installed concerned the distinction made between preachers and other followers. No documents have survived explaining exactly how and why this binary organisation was adopted. Whatever the case, it radically changed the movement's structure. Various hypotheses can be advanced to explain what happened. In my opinion, the first cause was doubtless that the original missionary spirit was lost, or at least toned down. By the second or third generation, the Poor of Lyons were confronted with an unexpected situation. Hounded from society and from the Church, they realised that new followers could no longer be converted; their faith was being passed on from father to son. Whole families had grown up, all adepts of the Poor of Christ. By necessity, they lived by their daily work. Both the growth in their numbers and the permanent threat of persecution meant they could no longer all live as beggars and preachers. There is no clandestinity without sacrifice. In this case, one part of the movement, indeed the greater one, became sedentary, giving up itinerancy, poverty and preaching. This did not mean the community as a whole turned its back on what had once been the keystone of its identity. A transfer occurred from the members as a whole to certain individuals within their ranks. This meant a chosen few would maintain the original tenets, while the others by force renounced them. They would function as a nostalgic reminder of the movement's halcyon days. They would be the group's living memory, the outward proof that their faith lived on. Symbolically, they would represent the ideal life to which the followers aspired, however impossible it might be to attain.

Besides such difficulties in practical terms, which in themselves might explain the gradual installing of a specialised body within the community, the Poor of Lyons may well have sought to align themselves with accepted practices elsewhere. Indeed, as we saw above, total equality was found nowhere other than among the Poor of

Lyons. Both the Roman Church and other dissenting groups adhered to a hierarchical model, not to mention lay society as a whole. It is difficult to tell whether the Poor of Lyons were influenced more by Rome or by other "heretics". Whatever the case, inquisitors such as Bernard Gui applied the Cathar scheme when referring to them, calling the group's members "believers" and its preachers "*perfecti*". In fact, there is nothing to suggest the Poor of Lyons themselves used such denominations. The terminology used tended to be rather inconsistent. Certain terms they did use, however, were ambiguous and potentially misleading. "Brothers" for instance referred sometimes to all the members of the dissent, at other times just to the preachers. From the fourteenth century on, however, the term was reserved for the latter. The designation "*perfecti*", borrowed from the Cathars is, in any case, incorrect particularly since, at the beginning of the fourteenth century when Gui was writing, such a bipartite division no longer really corresponded with reality and was even well on the way to becoming totally obsolete. The inquisitor Peter Zwicker referred to the preachers during investigations he was leading in Pomerania in 1392–1393 as follows: "They say that the heresiarchs call themselves 'Brothers' amongst themselves, that during confession they call them 'lords' [*dominos*], that they are the true successors of the disciples of Christ". During this series of trials in Stettin, the defendants referred to their preachers as "lords", "preachers" and "confessors". "Masters" [*magistri*] was also cited frequently during the trials in Piedmont in the fourteenth century. Whatever the terms used, the same distinction or even opposition is established between the flocks as a whole (the faithful, believers) and the leaders (lords, masters, *perfecti*). The division Gui reduced to a dichotomous vision in fact constituted a transitory phase between the initial egalitarian spirit of the early days and an organisation to come. The movement's internal structure appears to have changed quite rapidly; in any case, less than a century after Vaudès, the pastoral body of dedicated preachers, rather like the Roman clergy it resembled to a certain extent in terms of form, was divided into a series of rank.

Hierarchy

From the fourteenth century at least, most of the Poor of Lyons adopted a tripartite structure which, in keeping with their biblical literalism, could be justified by referring if not to the Gospels them-

selves at least to the New Testament in which it is stated that the first Christian community was divided into ranks to fulfil certain responsibilities. In around 1320, Bernard Gui wrote: "First of all, it must be known that the Waldensians have and establish above them a superior called the 'majoral' whom they have to obey, as Catholics obey the pope." He later explains, "The oldest member settles all matters concerning the priests and deacons."[18] This tripartite conception is not really incompatible with the binary division into "*perfecti*" and "believers" which the inquisitor describes. Just as the clerics, as against the laity, in the Roman Church were divided into orders at different levels, so the *perfecti* in the Poor of Lyons were not all equal. The inquisitor, who was writing up his memoirs at the end of his life, could be suspected of deforming statements he had heard, attributing an organisation on the Catholic model to "heretics" as a whole, were it not for a statement made by a "Waldensian deacon" confirming his words.

During twenty-four sessions from August 9, 1319 to April 30, 1320, Jacques Fournier, then bishop of Pamiers, interrogated a prime suspect. The statement is entitled "The Confession of Raymond of Costa, Waldensian heretic and Deacon in the sect." In this, the prisoner confirmed that he was a deacon and gradually described the manner in which the community as a whole was organised. They had a superior whom they called not "bishop" but "*majoral*" who, during a ceremony whose rites are listed in detail, ordained priests and deacons.[19] In this, they were following the model of the early Church which appointed an episcopacy, elders and deacons, in other words the three orders equally maintained by the Roman Church: the episcopacy, the priesthood and the deaconry. It is striking that the Poor of Lyons too chose to adopt this three-tier hierarchy; they were displaying faithfulness to the Holy Scriptures of course, but they were doubtless also imitating Rome. In this way they constituted a sort of ecclesiastical counter-type.

It is not clear how long this model lasted. During inquisitorial proceedings in Piedmont, the inquisitor Antonio of Settimo established

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[18] Bernard Gui, *op. cit.*, v. 1; pp. 48–51: "In primis itaque sciendum est quod valdenses habent et constituunt sibi unum superiorem super se, quem vocant majoralem suum, cui omnes tenentur obedire, sicut omnes catholici sunt sub obedientia domini pape."

[19] Jean Duvernoy, *op. cit.*, v. 1, pp. 40–122: "Confessio Raymundi de Costa, heretici valdensis et dyaconi in illa secta".

that in Barge in 1387 they were answerable to a "sovereign pontiff" [*summus pontifex*] living in Apulia in southern Italy who sent preachers out on missions.[20] And in 1451, Philippe Regis from Piedmont referred during his trial to the "master" [*magister*] who lived in Apulia.[21] But no mention was made on this occasion of priests and deacons. During the fifteenth century, earlier structures were either simplified or fell from use, and both the eastern and western branches of the Poor of Lyons returned to a binary organisation: Masters or Brothers on one side and the faithful or believers on the other.

The reasoning behind hierarchical ranks and how to organise them, however, continued to perturb the leaders. This is made clear when, in 1530, speaking on behalf on their fellow preachers, Georges Morel and Pierre Masson questioned the Reformers specifically on this point. The first *peticion* in fact, was to ask "whether, between ministers of the Word of God, they were to establish ranks of dignity such as episcopacy, presbyterate and deaconry". They continued, however, stating clearly that "Amongst ourselves, we nonetheless do not use such ranks."[22] This testimony, given as I have said of their own free will, shows that while the Brothers had abandoned a tripartite organisation, they were uncertain as to whether they had been right to do so. Their doubts would have been all the greater considering that their scrupulous readings of the Holy Scriptures which they respected to the letter would have taught them that Paul in his letters to Titus and to Timothy pleaded in favour of the three orders.[23] Be this as it may, the Poor of Lyons had discarded tripartition, by choice or under duress, by the fifteenth century. The most straightforward organisation was the one that prevailed, with a single body of preachers.

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[20] G. G. Merlo, *Eretici e inquisitorinella società piemontese del trecento*, Torino, Claudiana, 1977, p. 42.

[21] W. Weitzecker, "Processo di un valdese nell'anno 1451", *Rivista Cristiana*, 1881, pp. 363–367, p. 365.

[22] Valdo Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede dei valdèsi riformati*, Torino, Claudiana, 1975, pp. 44–45: "Primo, an inter verbi Dei ministros debeant ordinari dignitateum gradus, ut puta episcopatus, prebyterii et diaconatus . . . Hi tamen gradibus inter nos non utimur."

[23] 1 Tim. 3, 1: "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work", and also 3, 2; and then 8: "Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre"; and also 3, 10 and 12. Tit. 1, 7: "For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God".

CHAPTER TWO

THE POOR OF CHRIST

Hath not God chosen the poor of this world
rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom.
James 2, 5

Witnesses

It almost goes without saying that a historian's raw materials are eye witness accounts. These both link him to the witnesses and make him reliant upon them. Yet firsthand accounts are inevitably flawed, partial, incomplete. This is even more the case when dealing with religious issues, where beliefs, ideas, practices, behavioural patterns and attitudes, in various overlapping guises, have to be interpreted. In the case of the Waldensians, moreover, as for most religious dissents, eyewitness accounts tend more often than not to be ill-disposed.

Take the fourteenth century for instance. The wealth of documentation available to us is above all a reflection of the fact that the Inquisition was gathering momentum. Only one document from the era produced by the Poor of Lyons themselves has survived, this being the exchange of letters between the Lombard and Austrian Brothers dating from about 1368.[1] Other than this, the mass of documents consists of polemical treatises, manuals of inquisitorial proceedings and trials. Noteworthy among these were proceedings in the south of France between 1318 and 1325, led by Jacques Fournier, the bishop of Pamiers and the future pope Benedict XII, along with the Dominican inquisitor Bernard Gui. In Northern Italy, the Inquisition led by Albert di Castellario was set up in Giaveno in 1335, while in the same region of the Alps, Thomas di Casasco led

[1] Published by I. von Döllinger, *Beiträge zur Sektengeschichte des Mittelalters*, München, Beck, 1890, 2 v., v. 2, pp. 352–355; see G. Gonnet, *Il grano e le zizanie*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino Editore, 1989, 3 v., v. 3, pp. 1215–1261: "I valdesi d'Austria nella seconda metà del secolo XIV".

the trials in the Lanzo valleys in 1373 and Antonio of Settimo those in western Piedmont in 1387.[2] On a much larger scale were the proceedings led by Heinrich of Olmütz in Styria between 1360 and 1370—which prompted the exchange of letters referred to above between the Italian and Austrian Brothers in 1368—and especially those headed by Gallus von Neuhaus, another Dominican inquisitor, who for twenty years wielded power mercilessly in Bohemia, from 1335 to 1355.[3] Lastly, in Stettin, Pomerania and Brandenburg, the Celestine monk Peter Zwicker interrogated nearly two hundred people suspected of Waldensian heresy from 1392 to 1394.[4] Inquisitors' records are thus particularly rich in information about the Poor of Christ during this era; we know that, concurrently, many other delegates from Rome were also being appointed to help stamp out heretics, particularly Waldensian heretics, although few traces of their activities have survived. For instance, pope John XXII sent inquisitors to the dioceses of Prague (Bohemia) and Olmütz (Moravia) in 1318; Benedict XII did likewise in 1335. In the latter years of the century, Peter Zwicker and a certain Martin were major figures in the campaign against Waldensians in Erfurt in 1391, Pomerania and Brandenburg in 1393, Styria in 1395 and Hungary in 1400–1404. In other words, the Inquisition lasted almost the entire century, and extended across most of the lands where the Poor of Lyons had settled. The question we must ask is how much can really be gleaned from records of inquisitorial proceedings, considering these were essentially coercive.

The Diversity of Dissent

When one starts taking stock of accounts describing how "heretics" were interrogated and extracts of confessions made by defendants, whether freely or under duress, it comes as quite a surprise to realise quite how many heretical movements there were, scattered through-

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[2] Grado G. Merlo, *Eretici e inquisitori nella società piemontese del trecento*, Torino, Claudiana, 1977, p. 9 sq.

[3] A. Patschovsky, *Die Anfänge einer ständigen Inquisition in Böhmen*, Berlin-New York, Walter de Gruyter 1975; *Id.*, *Quellen zur Böhmischen Inquisition im 14. Jahrhundert*, Weimar, Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1979.

[4] D. Kurze, *Quellen zur Ketzergeschichte Brandenburgs und Pommerns*, Berlin-New York, Walter de Gruyter, 1975.

out the whole of Europe, and to what extent non-conformist religious groups had multiplied. Clerics drew up catalogues of heresies and their leading characteristics. To ensure none was overlooked, each was listed by name in conciliar decrees drawn up in Verona in 1184 and at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, where the Cathars, Patarins, Humiliati, Poor of Lyons, Passagins, Josephins and Arnaldisti, among others, were condemned.[5] For judicial reasons, of course, the inquisitors' manuals provided lists intended to be exhaustive. The manual by the Dominican Nicolaus Eymericus, for example, issued in Avignon in 1376 and revised and updated by Francisco Peña in 1578, listed ninety-six categories of heresy, from the best known to the most obscure.[6] Bernard of Luxembourg, another Dominican friar, is fastidious to the point of being obsessional when, in his *Catalogus haereticorum* issued in 1522, he manages to distinguish between 432 categories of present or former heresy, to which he conscientiously adds 26 unclassified heresies.[7] Clearly, the courts of faith began by drawing up methodological inventories, only to find themselves faced with a tangled web of heterodoxy. The inquisitors sought to disentangle this mesh by linking a particular error to a duly identified heresy, but in doing so they only succeeded in creating further complications for themselves. We can at least understand them on this point, since our difficulties are very much the same.

The first obstacle the inquisitors encountered was the population's ignorance on religious matters. Christians would often gloss over the subtler details of theological enquiry by explaining them as "mysteries": the Trinity, incarnation, redemption, the double nature of Christ, the sacraments and the nature of the Eucharist for example. Their faith was often completely erroneous in terms of Roman dogma, but upheld with the purest of intentions and a perfectly clear conscience. They had no dissenting or controversial intentions. Their beliefs were misguided simply because they had misunderstood what they had heard or been taught. This sort of situation existed throughout Europe, and lasted well beyond the middle ages. In the sixteenth

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[5] G. Gonnet, *Enchiridion fontium valdensium*, Torino, Claudiana, 1958, pp. 50–53: Concile de Vérone; pp. 158–160: Concile (IV) de Latran.

[6] N. Eymerich and F. Peña, *Le manuel des inquisiteurs*, ed. Louis Sala-Molins, Paris-La Haye, Mouton, 1973.

[7] M.-H. Vicaire, "Les albigeois ancêtres des protestants. Assimilations catholiques", *Cahiers de Fanjeaux*, n. 14, 1979, pp. 23–46, pp. 26–27.

century, both Erasmus and Luther were to speak out against the ignorance of the people, which, they argued, was but a reflection of the ignorance of the clergy. One century later, certain religious orders began to specialise in the "inner mission"; they felt no need to go and evangelise populations overseas since there were pagans to be found in their own lands, in Europe. In conditions such as these, the judges of the Inquisition had little trouble getting those accused of heresy to admit the error of their ways; suspects either did so of their own accord, out of pure naivety, or they fell without difficulty into the traps set for them. When the theologian judges heard their gross mistakes and glared indignantly at the simple men and women being charged, the defendants recognized instantly that they had erred and admitted their mistakes, doubtless thinking the cleric was getting worked up about minor issues.

Another difficulty arose from the misunderstanding which reigned between the courts and the suspects. The two sides came from different worlds. Since all that remains of the judicial proceedings is the account written by the court clerk, it is difficult to appreciate how often intentions were betrayed by words. One admittedly late example exists, but judicial procedures and proceedings were much the same from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. During a cross-examination led by a Dominican in Provence in around 1530, a woman charged with Waldensianism declared that Mary was a prostitute who was impregnated by Satan after going round the world seven times. In his report, the inquisitor quotes her words to show how perverse the heretical sect had become in that region. If no account other than the judge's had survived, the historian would doubtless be perplexed and, rather like the above-mentioned Dominican, have trouble deciding how best to catalogue such delusions. A complaint, however, was lodged against the inquisitor. Here it is claimed that the woman was simple-minded, and more importantly, that she was speaking of Mary Magdalene, the fallen woman of the Holy Scriptures, not Mary, the mother of Jesus as the inquisitor supposed. Was the friar being scrupulously honest? We do not know, but nor do we know the intentions of the defendant. In the absence of absolute proof, the friar should be given the benefit of the doubt.[8] The case is comparable to that of the Dominican from Friuli stud-

[8] National Archives, Paris, J 851, n. 2. On this specific case, see G. Audisio, "La

ied by Carlo Ginzburg.[9] The lesson to be drawn is that the deformation of words, resulting from mutual incomprehension, is an additional obstacle when classifying dissenters.

In other cases, it was the suspect himself who deliberately confused issues, particularly if he was the leader of a persecuted group. Such men tried to save themselves by resourcefulness, relying on a little book-learning and a passing knowledge of the law to protect them. In such cases, they hedged issues, answering questions by questions, claiming ill health and tiredness, or again ignorance of what was right and wrong; in doing so, they ran the risk of contradicting themselves, and possibly making mistakes, to satisfy the inquisitor. Unless he was a beginner, however, the inquisitor was rarely taken in by such ploys; his handbook, indeed, cited the various stratagems and taught the inquisitor how to defeat them. It is, however, not impossible that certain suspects managed to dupe the courts. In this case, their declarations are vague enough to resist being classified with any certitude.

A fourth difficulty arises linked to the psychological make-up of the inquisitor; indeed, the same can be said of the researcher or historian. The inquisitor, motivated by judicial zeal and the scholar, trained in analytical thinking, share the same need to clarify, classify and label. The dissenters' world, however, appears particularly vague, shifting and multifaceted. There may have been different groups, autonomous and organised, but these groups were in permanent contact with one another. There was often a sense of comprehension, even fraternity, between them, for they had much in common: their opposition to the Church was always based exclusively on reference to the Bible; they wanted to recreate a Christian community like that founded by the apostles; they tended to consider Rome as a wayward Church; finally, their persecution inevitably brought them together, for they shared a common enemy. In this way, certain characteristics in one dissenting community could easily be transmitted to another. The situation was such that their members were often prepared to participate in the clandestine meetings

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fiabilité des sources dans le cas d'une inquisition médiévale à la renaissance: Provence, vers 1530," *L'inquisizione romana: metodologia delle fonti e storia istituzionale*, a cura di Andrea Del Col e Giovanna Paolin, Trieste-Montereale Valcellina, 2000, pp. 33–49.

[9] Carlo Ginzburg, *I benandanti. Stregoneria e culti agrari tra Cinquecento e Seicento*, Torino, Einaudi, 1966.

of one or another movement. They were all convinced they were good Christians, the real Christians even. The judicial measures taken against them did nothing to alter this conviction; on the contrary, repression even strengthened their determination, for they likened their plight to that of the apostles, the first Christians, also persecuted for their beliefs. In other words, persecution came to justify their existence, it gave authenticity to their mission. Furthermore, the margins of the various groups were ill-defined: there was a "hard core" of leaders, then came the more or less solid ranks of the faithful, next, the regular supporters and last of all the more irresolute sympathisers. The truth of the matter is that we are dealing with a rather amorphous congregation, protean and elusive.

It is equally difficult to give a precise theological definition of these groups. While it may be relatively straightforward for an expert in canon law (that is, Church law, as opposed to common law or Roman law) to identify and classify individual instances of deviation from the faith, the various ways these errors came together and mixed, and the unexpected ways in which one deviation took precedence over another, tended to create a religious landscape that confounded as much the canonist of the era as it does the historian of today. This is yet another instance of both inquisitor and researcher, either from methodological zeal or from too hastily comparing a heretical tendency with the Roman model, expecting to find a perfectly clear doctrinal corpus, in which the truth is precisely recorded and whose orthodoxy is accurately defined. Nothing could be further from the truth. Within a given group of dissenters, opinions could vary considerably from one member of the same community to another, except on a few fundamental principles which, in many instances, did not constitute a 'doctrine' anyway. Even among the leaders themselves, they would not appear to have adopted a coordinated and organised catalogue of beliefs making a hierarchical, coherent system of doctrine in theological terms. There are just a few major points on which the dissent is based. This explains why it is preferable to refer to it as a religious sensibility rather than as a particular theology or even a doctrine. Furthermore, just as one could move easily from one group to another, so one could shift from one frame of mind to another. Ideas were frequently shared; certain notions inherent in one community could later appear elsewhere. In short, the syncretism that so matters to inquisitors and historians seems not to have been an issue for dissenters. They did

not apparently share their persecutors' preoccupation with cataloguing, anxious as the latter were to attribute to each exactly what was due to him, no more, no less.

This need to identify, classify and label groups so as better to convict and repress them must doubtless, somewhat paradoxically, have led the inquisitor into confusion. His need for clarification, so as to find himself on familiar territory, obviously signalling his need for mental security, meant he risked attributing to one community the ideas of another or linking an original non-conformist movement to an already identified heresy; in short, bringing unity to what was diverse, and taking for Waldensians dissenters who did not belong to the movement. The historian is prone to do likewise. Amadeo Molnar in the 1970s, and, more recently, Grado Merlo brought attention to this point in connection with the Poor of Lyons.[10] In their opinion, the essential concern for the movement at the time was that of identity and continuity. As mentioned earlier, divisions had emerged between the Ultramontanes and the Italian Brothers leading to the meeting in Bergamo in 1218 which reached only a partial settlement. The two groups both believed they belonged to the same brotherhood, just as the Italian and Austrian Brothers did, as their exchange of letters in 1368 demonstrates. Can the same be said of all the other ramifications? Who were those that the Roman Catholics hunted down across Europe under the name of Waldensians? Did these persecuted groups have a clear idea of their identity? Before venturing into the community of the Poor of Christ, we should first know exactly who they were and how to distinguish them. We will therefore now turn to the essential question of defining what it meant to be a "Waldensian."

An Identity

Evidently, it was not because someone was labelled "Waldensian" that he necessarily belonged to the movement, particularly since the Poor of Lyons themselves rejected that title. We do know that these

[10] A. Molnar, *Valdensti—Evropsky rozmer jejich vzdoru*, Prague, 1973; German translation: *Die Waldenser. Geschichte und Ausmass einer europäischen Ketzerbevegung*, Freiburg im Breisgau, Verlag Herder, 1993. G. G. Merlo, *Valdesi e valdismi medievali*, Torino, Claudiana, 1984; *Id., Identità valdèsi nella storia e nella storiografia, ibid.*, 1991.

are two names for the same movement, except that the first originally had pejorative connotations. In any case, in time, the term "Waldensian" came to have a generic sense, synonymous quite simply with heretic. In practice, the inquisitors, while priding themselves on identifying each sect, employed a number of different terms to refer to the Poor of Christ. "These heretics are commonly called Waldensians, the Poor of Lyons or the *ensavatés*", wrote Bernard Gui in his *Practica* at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Fifty years later, Nicolaus Eymericus echoed him in his manual: "The Waldensians, or Poor of Lyons , or *ensavatés* are named after their founder, a certain Valdès from Lyons."[11] Both men explain the origins of these titles. There is no need to go back over "Waldensian" or "Poor of Lyons" which are both self-explanatory. The term *ensavatés* is more intriguing. Both men offer the same explanation. "*Ensavatés* because, in the beginning, the 'pure' Waldensians wore a special sign in the shape of a buckle on the instep of their shoes, to distinguish themselves from their followers and from 'believers'", explains Bernard Gui.[12] "They are called *ensavatés* because the purest amongst them wear a sort of badge on their shoes so that they may be recognised", says Nicolaus Eymericus.[13] Comparing the two testimonies makes it possible to clear up lingering doubts. There is little chance that during the inquisition he led or in 1376 when he wrote, Eymericus had ever come across a Waldensian wearing a special badge on his shoes so as to be more easily recognised. The Poor of Lyons had long been refining the art of going unnoticed so as to protect their clandestinity. Gui's account is thus more likely to be reliable since, from the beginning of the century, he used the past tense; originally they *wore* a special sign. The name stuck, dating from the era when, speaking in public, the preachers from Lyons had invented a sign by which to be recognised so that everyone should identify the real preachers; the sign chosen, to signify their voluntary poverty, was a special sort of sandal called a "savate", perhaps bearing a special

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[11] N. Eymerich and F. Peña, *Le manuel des inquisiteurs*, ed. Louis Sala-Molins, Paris-La Haye, Mouton, 1973, p. 137.

[12] B. Gui, *Manuel de l'inquisiteur*, ed. G. Mollat, 2 v., Paris, 1964, v. 1, p. 38: "Insabbati autem dicti sunt quia olim a principio sui Valdenses perfecti speciale signum in modum quasi scuti in parte superiori sotularium deferebant, in quo signo ab aliis suis complicibus et credentibus differebant".

[13] N. Eymerich and F. Peña, *Le manuel des inquisiteurs, op. cit.*, p. 137.

badge. Whatever the case may have been, the Poor of Lyons never referred to themselves as *ensavatés* or as Waldensians.

How did they refer to themselves? Which names were positively connoted and as such suitable for use among themselves? The inquisitors can provide us with a first answer. Again, Bernard Gui refers to "the society that they call a fraternity", and later adds the following details, "They call one another Brothers and go under the name of the Poor of Christ or the Poor of Lyons." In another region altogether, towards the middle of the century, Gallus von Neuhaus refers to Waldensian heresiarchs, that is to say leaders, "whom they call Brothers among themselves". There are also the names that these "heretics" apparently used from the earliest days of their movement, since there is proof of their being in use from the end of the twelfth century and in the beginning of the thirteenth; names such as *Pauperes Christi*, [Poor of Christ] and *Pauperes Dei*, [Poor of God] to which we can add the expression which later became obsolete, *Pauperes spiritu*. These are the names the Waldensians appear to have chosen for themselves, if several different inquisitors are to be believed. There is, however, little reason to suspect them of inventing or falsifying these titles, for nothing was to be gained by doing so. On the contrary, they endeavoured to reproduce such concrete information as faithfully as possible so as to identify any Waldensian who might have thought he could conceal his link with the dissent and escape unnoticed. A small number of documents from within the community back up this hypothesis. From these, we can learn that they adopted and employed the following titles: Poor of God, Poor of Christ, Poor of Lyons and above all, Brothers. This, then, is the first means by which to identify them. When a suspect or defendant being questioned by the organs of justice accepts that such a name applies to him, or when a witness uses one of these terms to evoke someone known to him or her, we are very probably dealing with a member of the Poor of Lyons, called a Waldensian by his detractors. After all, accepting for oneself and for others a common name or title amounts to admitting that one belongs to the same community or spiritual family.

A good many people accused of "Waldensian heresy", however, fall outside this definition, which is rather over-simplified as it stands. The conviction that one belongs to a group derives from being conscious of having a common ancestry. By the fourteenth century, this shared heritage was based less around the memory of Vaudès, but

rather on the legend that was then growing up around him. The wealthy man from Lyons was said to bear the Christian name Peter; it was alleged that he was a priest so as to bring legitimacy to later preachers; most striking of all, the Poor of Lyons' origins were traced back to the time of pope Sylvester I or even farther back, to apostolic times. By so doing, the Poor of Lyons could maintain that they, like Peter and Paul, held their mission from Christ. Their belief in a history dating back to the dawn of Christianity can be found in testimonies written by leaders of the community, such as the exchange of letters in 1368 for example. This claim to ancestral roots served a double purpose. It enabled them to counter the Roman clerics' contention that Waldensianism was a "new heresy", while also reassuring the Poor of Christ that they were in the right, giving them a prestigious base such as any community needs to ensure its solidarity, without which its survival is compromised.

For the community to exist as a separate group and to distinguish itself from other heretics of the same era, it could obviously not rely merely on its members defining themselves as the Poor of Lyons or of Christ, referring to one another as Brothers and tracing their ancestry back to the apostles. We need too to sound their beliefs, since these defined their originality but were also at the origin of their vicissitudes. To what extent is it possible to define the opinions which set them apart from other dissents and ensured they constituted a homogeneous group? Bearing in mind what has been said above, and the various allowances we have made, it is still possible to isolate certain properties which go to make up their particular religious sensibility.

A Sensibility of Their Own

It is now time to turn to the question which has perhaps been intriguing the reader from the outset: all things considered, what did the Waldensian dissent amount to precisely? Which theological errors, stigmatised and condemned by the magistracy and declared heretical, had the dissent embraced? It is a central issue, even if the answer can but be multifaceted if it wishes to encompass the variations in time and space that can be observed in the different Waldensian communities. The documents available reveal a great many adepts but with differing, sometimes diverging, beliefs nevertheless claiming

to belong to the "Poor of Christ" or "Poor of Lyons", which is in itself a stumbling block. Some of these variations became so pronounced that the very unity of the movement appeared to be jeopardized, as has already been seen.

The opening chapters established that Vaudès and his followers first ran into difficulties over the question of preaching without the express permission of the ecclesiastical authorities. The message they were preaching was not contested. In effect, the document known as Vaudès' "confession of faith", possibly dating from 1180, refers to diverging positions in the group, whose orthodoxy nevertheless remained unchallenged. We know that even during Vaudès' lifetime, divisions arose, for instance when the "Poor Lombards", from across the Alps, held more radical positions on the sacraments and ecclesiastical power. There was also the case of those led by Durand of Osca, the author of an anti-Cathar treatise (*Liber Antiheresis*), who were prepared to temper their positions and, forming the group known as the "Poor Catholics", to fall back into line.[14] It is likely that after Vaudès' death, which was probably between 1205 and 1207, depriving them of his natural authority, the overall unity of the group became much harder to maintain.[15]

Difficult as it proves to draw hard and fast conclusions, we can still glean from the various surviving documents the basic tenets that went to make up the originality of Waldensianism in the fourteenth to fifteenth century. The basis upon which their other beliefs rested was, as we shall see, a literal reading and strict application of the Gospel. Yet even this had considerable impact, pitting the Waldensians against the Roman Church.

Another Approach

The challenge facing us is thus to define the distinctiveness of the Poor of Lyons, while making allowances for often widespread and far-reaching variations between members of the community, variations

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[14] K.-V. Selge, *Die Ersten Waldenser mit Edition des Liber Antiheresis des Durandus von Osca*, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 2 v., 1967.

[15] The upheavals within the early Waldensian community cannot be analysed here. Those interested might usefully consult my more synoptic overview: *The Waldensian Dissent. Persecution and Survival, c. 1170–c. 1570*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

that became more accentuated with the passing of time, their dissemination across Europe and the passage from one language to another. What one defendant suspected of Waldensian heresy declares to be true, another will deny. By comparing and contrasting testimonies, however, it is still possible, despite more peripheral differences, to identify an essential common ground, the keystone of the whole dissent. Before considering more specific doctrinal issues, however, it is worth examining the three founding issues of the Waldensian movement to see how they fared, two centuries on. Preaching remained essential but had completely changed in practice. Only the leaders of the community were entitled to preach, and the original habit of preaching in public had given way to preaching in private, only to the converted, as a result of persecution and clandestinity. Poverty was still an essential evangelical value but only the preachers were expected to adhere absolutely to this rule. The Bible, and more particularly the Gospel, remained their ultimate source of reference. Unlike the Roman Church and the later Reformist Churches, the Poor of Lyons were biblicists, or evangelists, believing the Bible was to be read at face value, and its message to be applied literally. This application to the letter of evangelical principles characterises the Waldensian movement as a whole. It was to cause them considerable hardship for it imposed certain attitudes and procedures which appeared provocative in the society of the time.

Beyond these three founding strictures, five other aspects had been central to the dissent.

Falsehood. Their rejection of falsehood came directly from the Holy Scriptures. Moralists had come to accept that, while falsehood was undeniably a deadly sin, there were exceptional circumstances when it might be forgiven. For the Poor of Lyons, the words of Christ on the matter would brook no concessions: "But let your communication be Yea, yea: Nay nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matthew 5: 37). On a practical, day-to-day level, this must have proved exacting. We may guess that they stretched the point sometimes. At the same time, the Church could hardly have challenged this moral stand, uncompromising as it may have appeared. A more damaging issue, which came up far more often in the trials, was their stand on oaths.

Oaths. The Poor Men of Christ were adamant on this point, and again quoted the Gospel in evidence. They could not swear by oath when Jesus himself had said, "Ye have heard that it hath been said

by them of old time, Thy shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all." (Matthew 5: 33–34). This rule would appear to have been respected faithfully. For all the inquisitors, it was a reliable characteristic of the Waldensians. Nicolaus Eymericus wrote of them, "They never swore by oath". Before him, Bernard Gui had reported that, "they maintain and they teach, with no exception and no explanation, that all oaths, in courts of law or elsewhere, are forbidden by God and are thus illicit and to be condemned for they interpret in an excessive and unreasonable manner the words of the Holy Scriptures and of the apostle St James condemning oaths". The rule was binding and unequivocal. Yet abiding by it meant the Poor of Lyons instantly denounced themselves before the courts, since the law stipulated that the inquisitor should open proceedings by asking the defendant to swear on the Bible. By refusing to do so, the suspect immediately put himself in the wrong: "You are deemed a Waldensian heretic who believes all oaths are illicit and worthy of condemnation". In this declaration, Bernard Gui draws on canon law which he quotes: "If some of them, acting upon condemnable superstitions, refuse to swear by oath, they shall for this be judged to be heretics". This greatly facilitated the task of the inquisitors, while making it considerably more difficult for the accused to prevaricate. Nearly all the Waldensians questioned in court tried to avoid giving sworn testimony. A case in point is that of Raymond of Costa, interrogated by Jacques Fournier on August 9, 1319. When presented with a Bible and asked to swear to tell the truth, he answered that he dared not swear in any way at all since once, when he had sworn to tell the truth, he had immediately been taken ill. The bishop then asked him to promise by his faith to tell the truth which he likewise refused to do. "When asked if he believed that swearing to tell the truth was a deadly sin, he answered that he did. Asked whether he thought he would have to swear to tell the truth to save his life, he answered that he believed he would not have to swear as it would be a sin and if he did, some misfortune would surely befall him". This is how the unfortunate man's trial began; from the outset he was convicted of Waldensian heresy.[16]

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[16] J. Duvernoy, *Le Registre d'inquisition de Jacques Fournier, 1318–1325*, 3 v. Toulouse: Privat, 1965, v. 1, p. 41.

The question of oaths has equally been a bone of contention between scholars. In a book review, a colleague contended that I had muddled two types of pledged oath in the middle ages: the oath of allegiance to a lord and the judicial oath on the Bible. She maintained that pledges of feudal loyalty were not an issue for the Waldensians, only sworn testimonies in court.[17] This is neither the time nor place to elaborate on such controversies, but the question can be settled in a word or two. In the Morel report of 1530, of Waldensian origin, the leaders of the community freely make the following acknowledgement: "Besides, we avoid oaths of any sort among our people", a decisive statement that allows no exemption, in keeping with Waldensian principles, i.e. abiding word for word by the Gospel.[18]

This was indeed what the inquisitor Bernard Gui had seized upon as well, two centuries earlier: "They maintain and teach equally that all oaths, in courts of justice or elsewhere, are, without exception and unquestionably, forbidden by God, illicit and wrong, for they thus interpret in an excessive and unreasonable way the words of the Holy Gospel and the apostle St John against oaths. And yet it is a fact that the oath is lawful and even obligatory in courts to affirm the truth, not only according to the doctrine of the saints, the Church doctors and the tradition of the holy Catholic Church, but also in virtue of a decree formerly brought against the above-named error: Should some of them, repudiating the religion of oaths

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[17] M.-C. Chavarot, «Le Français du XVI^{e} siècle mérite-t-il une actualisation?», *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, n. 152, 1994, pp. 205–216, p. 209: "My second misgiving concerns the swearing of oaths, condemned by the Poor of Lyons. G. Audisio maintains that feudal society was founded on the sworn oath, which, from the 16th century is an anachronism and implies a confusion between the oath of allegiance to a lord and the oath of truth, which are two very different things." To be just, criticism must be well-founded. In truth, oaths were regularly and frequently required in the 16th century, whether by the lord, the priest, the notary or the judge.

[18] Valdo Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede dei valdesi riformati*, Torino, Claudiana, 1975, p. 42: "Praeterea plebeculae nostrae, ne omnino iuret, vetamus". Many other testimonies could be cited, bearing up the principle of refusing to swear any form of oath. This did not prevent the Waldensians in practice from ever taking oaths as required by society, even "oaths of truth". This I have been able to verify referring to the notarial register for the seigneury of La Tour d'Aigues in Provence for the years 1543–1545. See Gabriel Audisio, "Les vaudois et la justice", Colloque d'Aix-en-Provence, 14–16 octobre 2004, *Justice et justiciables en France du moyen âge à nos jours* (publication forthcoming).

on the grounds of some condemnable superstition, refuse to swear, so shall they be declared heretics."[19]

Purgatory. The Poor of Lyons similarly based their denial of purgatory, another characteristic of the dissent, on the Holy Scriptures. The Roman Church knew full well that there was no direct mention of purgatory in the Bible, only a few allusions in the Old Testament. As Jacques Le Goff has shown, the belief in a third place in the hereafter became established amongst lettered clerics precisely in the twelfth century. While being intellectually enriching, abolishing the dualistic universe of paradise and hell, it still represented a theological novelty that took a long time to get accepted. It was only in about 1255 that it became a heresy to deny the existence of purgatory, and the doctrine behind it was only established in 1274 by the Second Council of Lyons. This means that when, in the first years of their existence, the Poor of Lyons denied the existence of purgatory, they were also in keeping with Roman theology. In fact they proved more faithful to the tenets of Catholicism than Rome itself when they continued to deny what the Church came to accept. The question of purgatory thus became for all the inquisitors a simple means by which to sound out Waldensians. When questioned in Giaveno in Piedmont on January 21, 1335, a priest, called Jean of Bricherasio, declared he had heard Andrea Sacherii saying that "there was no purgatory in the hereafter; those who did evil went straight to Hell, those who did good went to Heaven".[20] This was a common belief amongst the Poor of Lyons, attested across the communities in the south of France, in Austria and in Bohemia throughout their history.

Confession. The rejection of falsehood, oaths and purgatory were constant elements in the Waldensians' faith. There was a fourth issue which, unlike the three others, was less a matter of faith than of practice. Not that there is any precise separation between the two,

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[19] B. Gui, *op. cit.*, v. 1, pp. 38–41. He later goes on to say: "An oath is always and in whatever case a mortal sin; the 'believer' brought before a tribunal by the secular or ecclesiastical powers and obliged to swear by oath must confess it afterwards and do penance, as for any other fault." (pp. 60–63).

[20] G. G. Merlo, *Eretici e inquisitori nella società piemontese del trecento*, Torino, Claudiana, 1977, p. 164: "Dixit se audivisse ab Andrea Sacherii de Iavenno quod purgatorium non erat in alia vita, sed male facientes statim ibant ad infernum et benefacientes ad paradisum".

for most theoretical choices required concrete expression, and many religious practices implied a theological choice had been made, if only implicitly. In this case, it would appear that without actually wishing to take the place of the official clergy and to administer the sacrament of penance, the Poor of Lyons were from their early days called upon to hear their followers' secrets; as time went by, the combined pressures of clerical carelessness or inaptitude, the community's particularly critical situation and finally excommunication, prompted them to hear real confessions, convey proper penance and administer absolution. By the fourteenth century, this was standard procedure. Interrogated in 1319, Raymond of Costa confirmed such practices, as did suspects in Piedmont tried in 1335 and 1373 and also those interrogated by the inquisitor Gallus von Neuhaus in Prague between 1345 and 1349. A certain Heinrich, for example, was asked how often he had confessed to leaders of his sect. He replied,

> I have confessed twice. The first time, I was led by Elisabeth, my brother's widow, and her sister Gredla who had told me what good men these leaders were and how pure their faith. . . . The second time, the same confessor came to my house last year, around the feast of St. Martin, and again I confessed to him, he bade me do penance which I performed in part, believing it would help my salvation and also that he had the right to grant or refuse absolution.[21]

All inquisitorial documents attest the practice of confession. Bernard Gui, for example, wrote in his *Practica*,

> They claim to have received—this is what they believe and what they teach—from God and God alone as the apostles did from Christ, the power to hear the confessions of men and women wishing to confess to them, and also the power to absolve them and impose penance. They thus hear confessions, absolve and impose penance, without ever having been ordained as priests or clerics by a bishop of the Roman Church; they even deny its power, and by doing so hold their authority neither from God nor from his Church, since they were expelled from the Church by the Church itself, outside which there is neither true penance nor salvation.[22]

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[21] A. Patschovsky, *Quellen zur Böhmischen Inquisition im 14. Jahrhundert*, Weimar, Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, p. 204.

[22] B. Gui, *op. cit.*, v. 1, pp. 42–43.

This is not merely the opinion held by inquisitors who could be suspected of misstating or falsifying facts. The letters exchanged between the Brothers in 1368 refer to this practice, admittedly deemed a 'half-sacrament' by those who had just returned to the embrace of the Roman Church.

Donatism. This observance, like that of the Eucharist to which we shall return, for variations were more frequent, reflects a double-sided principle which is fundamental to the history of the Waldensian movement. Inquisitors referred to it as a "heretical article". There was nothing particularly innovatory at the outset. It picked up on a deviation from doctrinal norms known as "donatism," after Donatus, bishop of Carthage, which originated in Africa in the fourth century and was condemned by the Church at the Council of Arles in 314 and in Carthage in 411. The donatists held that the sacrament was valid only if the administering minister led a sufficiently worthy life; the Roman hierarchy maintained that so long as the rites and intentions of the Church were respected, the priest's words were effective, irrespective of his personal life. As far as Rome was concerned, even if the sacrament were administered by a cleric living in mortal sin, it remained valid. By the end of the twelfth century, certain Brothers, particularly from the Italian branch, had adopted a donatist position, while their French counterparts remained faithful to the traditional teachings of Rome on this point. This divergence of opinions again surfaced during the meeting in Bergamo in 1218. It is easy to understand why the donatist position came to predominate within the Waldensian community. It was widely asserted that a bad cleric could not give a true sacrament nor could a notoriously corrupt priest hear confession. This was succinctly voiced by a man accused of heresy by the inquisitor Gallus von Neuhaus in Prague on June 26, 1337: "What forgiveness can a priest who is himself a sinner grant me?"[23] Even after the Church began persecuting them, the preachers generally took to heart the appeals of the population wishing to confess to these poor men who appeared far more faithful to the Holy Scriptures than did the Roman clergy.

The second aspect, which developed from the first, concerned how this attitude should be defined in theoretical terms. Gradually during

[23] A. Patschovsky, *Quellen zur Böhmischen Inquisition im 14. Jahrhundert*, Weimar, Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, p. 242.

the thirteenth century, a dual line of thought deriving from the donatist question had emerged amongst the Poor of Christ, and by the fourteenth century this had been fully integrated. Any priest failing to imitate Christ and the apostles in his daily life lost his sacerdotal power; on the other hand, God granted to any man living an apostolic life in absolute poverty, be he from the laity, the power to consecrate the sacrament. This amounted to a double justification of the Waldensians' mission. First, from a negative point of view, the priests of the Roman Church led unworthy, if not dissolute, lives and as such no longer had the right to deliver the sacraments. The congregations, however, were in need of the sacraments for their salvation. Second, from a positive point of view this time, the Poor of Lyons, who led apostolic lives, as itinerant preachers with no worldly goods or work, could alone claim the right to meet these needs. Holding their mission from God, whatever the Church might say on the matter, they were well suited to answer to fellow Christians' spiritual needs. The faithful, those at least who belonged to the community and accepted the Brothers as their 'masters', were indeed convinced that priests were unfit whereas the evangelical lifestyle adopted by the Brothers granted them their power. All testimonies are unanimous on this point, as the trials bear witness, even those held in Pomerania on the other side of Europe. Cune Conrad, for instance, a man of forty years of age questioned in Stettin on November 22, 1392, denied the existence of purgatory, refused oaths and falsehood and maintained the practice of confession observed by the "heresiarchs"and his donatist vision of the clergy.[24] These were indeed the five structuring principles in specifically religious terms on which the Waldensian dissent was founded and which, in their eyes, vindicated it.

Nuances and Variations

There were other differences which alienated the Waldensians from the Church of Rome but these were neither as generalised nor as permanent in the history of the Poor of Lyons as were the five points discussed above, although they were often not insignificant in terms

[24] D. Kurze, *Quellen zur Ketzergeschichte Brandenburgs und Pommerns*, Berlin-New York, Walter de Gruyter, 1975, pp. 79–81.

of religious life either. Two aspects are most frequently observed towards the beginning of the movement, two others were more widespread towards the end, the fourteenth century representing to some extent a pivotal point in their history.

The Death Penalty. Again, it was on account of their strict observance of the Holy Scriptures that the Poor of Lyons rejected capital punishment in the early days of their movement. Jesus' words were unequivocal for them: "You have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of judgement. But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgement . . ." (Matthew 5: 21–22). They also cited Jesus' words to Peter when he sought to defend him: "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matthew 26: 52). This was a purely theoretical issue at the time, since none of the Poor of Christ belonged to the civil magistracy. It was nonetheless recorded as one of their "errors", for example by Bernard Gui:

> On the same grounds [as refusing to take oaths] the following error is maintained: since all judgement is forbidden by God and is thus a mistake, a judge therefore rises up against God if he condemns a man to chastisement of the flesh or death whatever the situation and the cause may be. This is because they apply without the necessary interpretations the words of the Holy Scriptures where it is written, "Judge not and you shall not be judged," "Thou shalt not kill" and other similar texts. They do not understand these, and can grasp neither their meaning nor their interpretation; while the holy Roman Church has wisely interpreted them and passes their meaning on to the faithful according to the doctrines of the Fathers and doctors and to canon decisions.[25]

In fact, within the community, opinions varied on this point and it would appear to have become increasingly tenuous over the years. In 1530, however, leaders within the movement expressed doubts over the question of whether God had commanded civil authorities to punish murderers, thieves and delinquents with death.

The Eucharist. The Poor of Lyons came to celebrate the Eucharist, as they had come to hear confession, as an answer to the pressing

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[25] B. Gui, *op. cit.*, v. 1, pp. 40–41.

needs of twelfth century congregations, who were abandoning mass on account of the Cathar heresy and also the unseemly lives led by priests. A certain evolution can nevertheless be traced. In the beginning, they observed the "breaking of the bread" [*fractio panis*] on the model of Christ during the Last Supper. It would appear that this celebration was only held once a year, on Maundy Thursday. This is what Raymond of Costa described at considerable length during interrogations on January 5, 1320 in Pamiers (Ariège, France); the ceremony included bread, wine and fish. The officiant asked God to bless them, "Not as a sacrifice, nor as an immolation but simply in remembrance of the Holy Supper of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of his disciples." When the bishop asked him what virtue he attributed to the bread, wine and fish once they had been duly blessed, Raymond replied: "No special virtue results from this blessing; it is done only in remembrance of the Lord's Last Supper."[26] In this era, however, Bernard Gui reports that they did believe in transubstantiation:

> They are firm believers and maintain that the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are present. If anything is left of the sacrament, they keep it until Easter and then finish it entirely. During the year, they give only consecrated bread and wine to the sick.[27]

It is quite likely that divergences grew up between the Poor of Lyons concerning the symbolical or real value of the Last Supper. Certain differences were expressed at the meeting in Bergamo in 1218 and surface again in the letters from 1368. Statements from defendants during the trials tend to be vague, or, when they are precise, prove to be contradictory. The presence of Christ in the Eucharist is sometimes affirmed, sometimes denied. In the former case, presence is interpreted in various ways, now in body, now in spirit. Jacques Ristolassio, condemned by the inquisitor on March 8, 1395, declared that "the host which has been consecrated and placed in the receptacle does not contain the real Christ since he could not live there."[28] Such down-to-earth reasoning amounted to denying real presence. On June 5, 1373, Lorenzina attributed the following opinion to

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[26] J. Duvernoy, *Le registre d'inquisition de Jacques Fournier, 1318–1325*, 3 v., Toulouse, 1965, v. 1, p. 68.

[27] B. Gui, *op. cit.*, v. 1, pp. 44–45.

[28] G. Boffito, «Eretici in Piemonte al tempo del Gran Scisma (1387–1417), *Studi e documenti di stiroa e diritto*», 18, 1897, pp. 399 sq.

another suspect: "The body of Christ is not found in the host which the priest has consecrated."[29] In a different region, in 1387, following Jean Pruza from the Vallouise valley (Hautes-Alpes, France) the Waldensians from Barge believed that "Whosoever belonged to their sect could consecrate the body of Christ."[30] Things thus become clearer: once again, as was the case for confession, the donatist trend accounts for these divergences.

In this case, Bernard Gui had well understood their position: "They maintain secretly, but not publicly, that during the sacrament at the altar, the bread and wine do not become the body and the blood of Christ if the priest celebrating or consecrating the office is a sinner; by sinner they mean any man not belonging to their sect. Similarly, they also claim that any good man, even a layman who has not been ordained by a Catholic bishop, can consecrate the body and the blood of Christ, so long as he belongs to their sect; women, too, may do the same according to the same principles. If we are to believe what they say, every saint is a priest." This was clearly and unequivocally explained to the inquisitor in Prague in 1337 when a suspect in a church declared to the consecrated host after the Elevation: "If you are really the body of Christ, I adore you; if you are not, I don't adore you." To the astonished laymen around him, he explained, "I suspect the officiant of having been with a woman last night and so of not being able to consecrate the sacrament."[31] On March 23, 1387, while being questioned, Laurent Bandoria from Piedmont living in Osasco in the Cluson valley maintained even more simply and precisely that, "A bad priest can neither make nor consecrate such a good sacrament as a good priest can."[32] If the donatist trend was to become a permanent feature in Waldensian belief from the thirteenth century onwards, the conception and the practice of the Eucharist were to be considerably modified. This can easily be explained, for while some held that good Catholic priests could consecrate the bread and wine, others

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[29] G. G. Merlo, *Eretici e inquisitori nella società piemontese del trecento*, Torino, Claudiana, 1977, p. 262.

[30] G. Amati, «Processus contra Valdenses in Lombardia superiori anno 1387», *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 1 (37, 1865), p. 39.

[31] A. Patschovsky, *Quellen zur Böhmischen Inquisition im 14. Jahrhundert*, Weimar, Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, p. 249.

[32] G. Amati, *op. cit.*, 1 (37, 1865), p. 24.

believed that in fact, only the Brothers could do so since they alone lived in apostolic poverty.

Ecclesiastical Power. As the entire community of the Poor of Lyons gradually came to disdain the Roman clergy, so a whole host of traditional religious practices was thrown into question. In the early days, as we saw above, Vaudès and his followers did not dispute ecclesiastical power beyond the question of their excommunication which they deemed unjust. Gradually, as their condemnation became more effective, they took a more disparaging view on other matters, some members later going so far as to oppose all rulings of the Church which did not derive directly from the Holy Scriptures. As a result, the various measures taken against the "heretics" such as privation of office, excommunication and anathema, as well as the indulgences granted by Rome, were declared to be worthless. In the early fourteenth century, people like Raymond of Costa did not yet hold such extreme views. Others, however, were already thinking in this way. This enabled Bernard Gui, never one to play down his opinions, to write: "The sect accepts neither canonical sanctions, nor the decrees and constitutions of the sovereign pontiffs; they equally refuse rulings concerning fasts, saints' days and the decrees of the Elders. Having strayed from the path of truth, they believed these to have no worth whatsoever, they despise, reject and condemn them." Nicolaus Eymericus echoes him, in blunter terms: "They consider as worthless the decrees and statutes of the sovereign pontiff." In reality, their positions were far more variable. In the fourteenth century, however, on this matter as on so many others, it was the inflexible stance which was most often recorded, even if later testimonies show that more moderate attitudes had also persisted.

The Saints. On this issue, discussions centred on the power of the keys. This had been conferred by Christ on Peter and the apostles: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18: 18). The question was: who held that power? The apostles alone? The bishops who claimed to be their successors? The pope and his delegates? Neither the pope nor his forebears since they lived wrongfully, or at least had done since the time of pope Sylvester? If the latter case were true, then only the Poor of Lyons really held that power since, by imitating the apostles' life of poverty, they were their true descendants. They rejected the edicts of the pope and the bishops having refused to acknowledge that they held the power of the

keys; this also explains why the Poor of Lyons subsequently rejected purgatory and indulgences. Consequently, they called into question the pope's power to canonise saints. This explains why the Poor of Lyons were reserved in their attitude towards the cult of saints which, as is well known, gave rise to a wealth of practices, all more or less superstitious, based on relics and pilgrimages; these too were thrown into question.

> These heretics refuse to accept the reality of miracles within the Church due to the merits and prayers of the saints who, they maintain, have never intervened in any way. In the same way, they insinuate amongst themselves that the saints in heaven do not listen to prayers and pay no attention to the homage we on earth pay to them; the saints do not pray for us, it is therefore useless to entreat their suffrage. Consequently, the Waldensians hold in contempt the solemnities which we celebrate in honour of the saints, as well as the other signs of veneration and homage; and on saints' days, if they can do so without too great a risk, they work.[33]

Statements from the community in Piedmont made to the inquisitorial courts in the middle or at the end of the century are clear on this point: "We should not pray to saints asking that they intercede for us with God; our prayers should be addressed to God alone"; "The apostles and the other saints have no power and should not be applied to."[34] In Prague, this is cited as a heretical article: "The saints should be neither invoked nor venerated, nor should the Virgin Mary."[35] In fact, from different angles and in different ways, the Poor of Lyons were throwing doubt on the very authority of the Church. But was this not merely a question of opinion held by a handful of misfits? It remains to be seen why such points of view made them dangerous, to the point of unsettling, even to some small degree, the all-powerful Church of Rome.

Two points should be underlined as this overview of beliefs held by the Waldensian community comes to an end. First, it is important to recall the misunderstanding that has often arisen when scholars have tried at all costs to define a clear, coherent theological

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[33] B. Gui, *op. cit.*, v. 1, pp. 46–49.

[34] G. G. Merlo, *Eretici e inquisitori nella società piemontese del trecento*, Torino, Claudiana, 1977, p. 36; Antoine Galosna, Septembre 1388.

[35] A. Patschovsky, *Quellen zur Böhmischen Inquisition im 14. Jahrhundert*, Weimar, Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, p. 321.

position common to all the Poor of Lyons. There is no dogmatic corpus that in itself makes up the Waldensian dissent. The fact of the matter is that even if the Waldensians counted a number of learned men amongst themselves, the vast majority were country folk, and had little formal learning to speak of, and this goes for the leaders and guides too. This will be made clearer further on. This is not to disparage the fervour that accompanied their piety, nor to underplay the warmth of their convictions and beliefs or the zeal they showed in their observances. What it does mean is that the various positions the Waldensians defended go to make up a religious sensibility that has little in common with fully argued, organised theological theses.

My second point concerns the variations observed within the community over beliefs or opinions, in particular concerning the Eucharist or the cult of saints. A lot of energy has been spent trying to bring a little order to the matter, certain scholars going so far as to identify divergences that even belie the idea of a Waldensian community, and speak instead of Waldensian "dissents". The question is both central and vexed, for it touches on the whole dilemma of unity versus diversity. The very fact of belonging to a specific religious group implies that views and practices are shared. This does not imply uniformity prevails as a general rule. The example of the Catholic Church is a case in point. Everyone will agree that it is one of the most centralised communities, as the mention "Roman" so aptly implies. Yet by leading a little inquiry of my own, several Sundays in a row, as the congregation filed out of a church in Marseilles, I was able to appreciate quite how broadly Catholic worshippers could differ in opinion over the question of the Eucharist, and in so doing, reflect nearly all identified interpretations ranging from the most "heretical", long since condemned by Rome, through Donatist, Lutheran, Calvinist and Zwinglian conceptions. Nor is this merely a reflection of the distance between theologians and believers, between the specialists and everyman; these are differences between believers themselves. But this does not stop the various different members of the congregation from believing that they all belong to the Church of Rome.

All things considered, my own answer to the question is that the question of belonging to a community or not cannot boil down to some decisive, outside criterion; it is a question of how a person chooses to define him or herself. If someone deems that they are

part of a certain congregation or association, if they show obedience where obedience is due, submit to the relevant authority, and, in the case in point, choose to declare themselves to be "Waldensian", or "from the Poor of Lyons", what right can we possibly have to contend this? In point of fact, the problem that source material raises for the historian is, as we saw above, rather the contrary, for the question to be settled is whether this or that individual, suspected or accused of Waldensianism, really was a member of the community. The question of excommunication can shed further light on the matter.

CHAPTER THREE

"DIE BRÜDER"

Moreover the spirit lifted me up,
and brought me unto the east gate of the Lord's house.
Ezekiel 11, 1

The previous chapters have shown how generations of repression and persecution broke up the Waldensian community, resulting in a diaspora across Europe, from Apulia to the Baltic, from Provence to Poland. The situation rapidly became crucial as a result of the state of transport systems in those times, for how were links to be maintained between people living hundreds, even thousands, of kilometres apart? The central, practical issue came down to one simple question: how could unity be maintained in a community so far-flung?

It takes no great feats of the imagination to conjure up the hurdles that henceforth needed to be faced. Travelling meant going by foot, or perhaps in a cart, carriage or wagon, at best on horseback. Admittedly, our ancestors were better walkers by far than we are today; pilgrims' guides, for example, have enabled us to establish that up to forty kilometres could be covered by day. This does not deter from the fact that it was one thousand kilometres from the Piedmont valleys to Bohemia, and there were still even greater distances from one side of the diaspora to the other. To travel so far, it would have taken at least two weeks using horse-drawn transport and more than a month by foot.

The extension of the community was for the most part a result of successive waves of migration eastwards, following which settlements were gradually established. The Waldensians, alongside numerous other groups, thus took part in the huge march to the east which began in the early thirteenth century, an exodus undertaken irrespective of the real, substantial perils of travelling in those times.[1]

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[1] See C. Higounet, *Les Allemands en Europe centrale et orientale au Moyen Age*, Paris,

Scholars, be they historians, ethnologists or sociologists, working on immigrant populations, have long been aware of the fact that first and even second-generation immigrants maintain links with their homeland, but as time goes by these links weaken and gradually dwindle away. In such conditions, how could contact within the community be maintained?

One of the first difficulties to arise was one of language, which was both a consequence of migration and a sign of acclimatisation to the adoptive country. We have seen how decisive the question of language was for Vaudès from the outset. The question of preaching the Word of God and reading the Scriptures in the vernacular was novel indeed, and also a fundamental issue for the movement's founder. It was for this reason that he commissioned clerics to translate certain books of the New Testament into the Franco-Provençal dialect commonly spoken in the Lyons region, just so their message could be heard and heeded. This may seem a minor feature to us today, but at the time, it was innovatory to the point of being iconoclastic, breaking with tradition, shaking up customs, startling the clerical and learned classes. In fact, this was not the result of a decision explicitly made by the Church of Rome—which would not come till later—but the reflection of a tradition dating back centuries: the Bible could be read only in Latin, in Saint Jerome's version established at the turn of the fifth century, the so-called "Vulgate".[2] So long as the population spoke Latin, this stricture had posed no real problem. As the common language evolved, however, and as a variety of tongues grew up across the former Roman Empire, so Latin was restricted more and more to liturgical purposes.

As a consequence, the Word of God was being pronounced in a language that sounded increasingly foreign to local ears. Admittedly sermons had adapted to the times, for the priest delivered these in

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Aubier, 1990. This eastward march is not incompatible with colonisation in the opposite direction See A. Ducellier & *alii*, *Les chemins de l'exil. Bouleversements de l'est européen et migrations vers l'ouest à la fin du moyen âge*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1992.

[2] Vulgate: "Vulgata editio" (edition commonly employed); since the end of the middle ages, the term had been reserved for the translation by Saint Jerome. The official decision was made at the Council of Trent (April 5, 1546): "the old edition of the Vulgate, approved by the Church and long in use over the centuries, must be taken to be authentic in public lessons, discussions, sermons and explanations, and no one shall have the audacity or the presumption to reject it, for whatever pretext." It was first printed by Gutenberg in 1456.

the local tongue. The two readings given by the clergy at the heart of mass, the Epistle and the Gospel, were in Latin, however, despite the fact that even the cleric reading could not always understand. As a result, bible study for many congregations implied relying far more on the commentaries that the clerics proposed than on the sacred texts themselves. This did not deter from the fact that those in favour of changing the situation were not merely questioning an old practice; they were impinging on the whole question of inspiration that the church elders had debated for centuries. God had spoken through the Bible. So far, so good. But which language had He chosen to speak to men? Hebrew? Aramaic? He had certainly not spoken in the Greek of the Septuagint, and yet this was the text Saint Jerome had used to establish his translation. Nevertheless, the idea gradually became accepted that this was the version of the "Vulgate" that had been "inspired" by God. This meant the translation was more precisely "the Word of God". It was thus impossible to "translate this translation" without altering the text; no adaptation of its form could be envisaged as this would inevitably adapt its contents. Here was the logic behind the adamant position defended by the Roman clerics, which explains why they were so hostile to any pastoral measures aimed at bringing the holy texts nearer the population. Translations were authorised, but for study purposes only, not for public hearing. Voices had already been heard, clamouring for a change in the situation; Vaudès was part of this impetus, asking what purpose it served to announce the divine message in an incomprehensible tongue.

While the "Waldensian society" remained in Lyons, and later in the Lyons region, there was no language barrier to speak of within the community. The combined pressures of expansion, conversion, persecution and migration, however, soon brought the question to the fore. There are no documents directly commenting on this aspect of the Waldensian message before the fourteenth century. What we do know is that in those days the leaders of the community preached and read the Scriptures in the local tongue. If, in the early fourteenth century, however, the language of the founder could still be understood even by the populations newly settled as far away as in central Europe, indirect sources enable us to establish that by the end of the century, the Waldensians in Austria, Bohemia and Pomerania no longer spoke either Franco-Provençal or another Romance tongue. Even in Fribourg, this had become problematic. We can

thus trace a fissure, slowly but surely making its way across the Waldensian diaspora and dividing it in two: the Germanic group to the east, stretching from Alsace and Switzerland[3] as far as Bohemia and Poland, and the Romance group in the west extending from south-west France to southern Italy. While insufficient source material makes it difficult to define this evolution clearly, there are clear reasons to believe that the initial unity gradually gave way to two subdivisions, each tending to turn in upon itself, although not without keeping the distant memory or even a nostalgic image of their initial unity, even maintaining vague, but increasingly tenuous links with those from the "other side". What we now need to ask is whether these language-linked difficulties were not a reflection of the situation more generally facing the community.

It would seem that the Germanic community, doubtless for security reasons that are only too easy to understand, tended to close in upon itself. The terms they used to speak of themselves are proof in itself, for vocabulary in general, and the choosing of names in particular, is no minor issue. The example given by Peter Zwicker, an inquisitor in Pomerania in the late fourteenth century, is a case in point. One of the questions he recommended to be put to someone suspected of Waldensian heresy went as follows: "Have you and your fellows spoken of yourselves as 'acquaintances' and of others as 'strangers'?" This refers to the fact that culprits had frequently declared during interrogations that they referred to others as "di fremdem" or "dy vremden", which is to say "die Fremden" or "strangers" in German. A single declaration, made by Jacob Hildebrant from Gossauw, questioned in January 1393 and speaking about his sect, can illustrate this: "outside this [the sect], no one can be saved and this is why he calls us, Christians, di fremden."[4] It would appear

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[3] The case of the Fribourg Waldensians, concerning whom court proceedings have been published and studied by K. Utz Tremp, is slightly different. This zone was situated at the meeting point between the Romance area and the Germanic area. Certain documents are written in French, and many patronyms reflect the southern origins of families (name such as Lombard or Perrotet, for example). The vast majority, however, are Germanic, and Germanisms crop up in the sources. For this reason, and to avoid unnecessary complications, I chose to include this region within the eastern wing of the Waldensian diaspora. The nuance, however, should not be overlooked.

[4] D. Kurze, *Quellen zur Ketzergeschichte Brandenburgs und Pommerns*, Berlin-New York, Walter de Gruyter, 1975, p. 74; p. 247, interrogatory of Katherina, wife of Hennyng Gerkens, March 16, 1394: "et ideo nos katholicos nominavit alienos i.e. di fremden";

that the term should be taken to mean "strangers to the Waldensian community" since strictly speaking it was they, the Waldensians, or their parents at least, who were the strangers or foreigners. What is striking is the sense of mutual exclusion. Testimonies such as this also say much about the local idiom, henceforth used in their daily lives and thus proving a certain degree of social integration.

The way the preachers were organised was a direct reflection of this evolution for they too would appear to have divided into two bodies, although sources are fewer as far as the eastern branch is concerned. Our major concern in this chapter, however, will be these eastern preachers.

From the fifteenth century at the latest, and often by the fourteenth, the Waldensian community had opted for a simplified organisation. Having first rejected any notion of a hierarchy, and then hesitated between several varieties, they finally settled on the principle of two bodies, as was seen above—the faithful on the one hand and the preachers on the other. This was no less than a reproduction of the very first Christian community, made up of the apostles and the believers. This two-sided division would seem to have been generally adopted, both by the Romance communities representing the western wing of the diaspora, and by the Germanic wing, to the east.

The first question to ask concerns their name. As the early chapters of the work underlined in relation to the term "Waldensian", it is important to know how the leaders of the community referred to themselves, how their flocks spoke of them and how too the authorities hunting them down might label them. The inquisitors and judges used a whole wealth of pejorative names, the most technical of which was doubtless "heresiarchs". In canon law, this term is reserved for those responsible for a heresy or guilty of spreading it; in such a context, it is thus an accusation or a condemnation. The *Inquisitors' Manual* gives the following definition: "Heresiarchs are not limited to those who err and cling to their errors: they are those who formulate errors, invent them, and again those who preach them."[5]

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p. 249, interrogatory of Clauss Flyetman, March 19, 1394: "et ideo nos dy vremden nominaverit"; p. 113, Jacob Hildebrant: "Interrogatus, an crediderit suam sectam esse veram fidem christianam, respondit, quod sic et quod extra illam nullus possit salvari et ideo vocaverit nos christianos di fremdem."

[5] Nicolaus Eymericus and Francisco Peña, *Le manuel des inquisiteurs*, par Louis Sala-Molins, Paris-La Haye, Mouton, 1973, p. 60.

From the Catholic point of view, there is no doubting the fact that the Waldensian preachers were heresiarchs. For this reason, a different fate was reserved for them: they were not to be allowed to recant, but were delivered to the secular arm, which meant burning at the stake. The *Manual* nevertheless makes the following proviso: "No torture should be spared the heresiarch, even should he have sincerely abjured. But the Church is clement and has not foreseen that all heresiarchs shall be delivered alike to the flames: it allows that the heresiarch who wishes to be converted and abjure can be imprisoned for life."[6] Although this establishes a certain degree of variety in sentences, it comes down to executing or imprisoning the offender for life, in theory at least, since pre-modern society had no notion of life imprisonment.[7] Whatever the case, all heterodox preachers, including Waldensians, were pursued with greater intensity.

It goes without saying that the followers did not call their preachers "heresiarchs". It is important to bear in mind that not only did the Waldensians not consider themselves to be heretics, but they equally deemed the Roman Church itself to have gone astray. They applied to their own community what tradition had taught them to believe: that they alone would be saved. Numerous voices can be heard on this point, such as Cune Conrad, who reacted to the inquisitor questioning him in 1392 as follows: "Asked whether he believed that his sect was the true Catholic faith, outside which no one could be saved, he answered yes."[8] Moreover, they took up the words which an old biblical tradition attributed to Israel speaking of himself, and believed they were the "few left" thanks to which mankind would be saved. Even the persecution they suffered came to confirm that they were God's chosen ones. Thus arose a form of "superiority complex", which is not so uncommon amongst persecuted religious minorities.[9]

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[6] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[7] L. Bély, ed., *Dictionnaire de l'Ancien Régime*, Paris, PUF, 1996, p. 1023: "Prisons: There was no prison sentence, in *ancien régime* law." (André Laingui). This held equally for canon law: "Prison was regularly instituted for capture, and not for a sentence." (Louis Sala-Molins, *Le dictionnaire des inquisiteurs. Valence, 1494*, Paris, Galilée, 1981, p. 350).

[8] D. Kurze, *Quellen zur Ketzergeschichte Brandenburgs und Pommerns*, Berlin-New York, Walter de Gruyter, 1975, p. 80.

[9] G. Audisio, "Le sentiment de supériorité dans les minorités: L'exemple des vaudois aux XV^{e}–XVI^{e} siècles", *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi*, n. 194, June 2004, pp. 25–36.

What terms, then, did the preachers use to refer to themselves. One extremely precise testimony can help us on this point, the result of one question asked by the inquisitor Gallus von Neuhaus, a zealous pillar of the Inquisition in Prague in the 1340s, to bring the day's proceedings to a close:

> Questioned as to the names they themselves were called by in their sect.
> —He answered that they themselves were called men of probity and known men.[10]

As for the names by which the Waldensians referred to their preachers, court reports enable us to trace a series of terms, "brother", "master", "good man" confessor", "lord" [dominus], all of which are strikingly positive.[11] Clearly they reflect the respect the preachers inspired in their followers, in theoretical terms at least, for this will have to be corroborated by what they had to say and more generally what their attitudes can reveal about their attitude to their leaders.

Missionaries and "Beichtiger"

The concept of a "mission" or a "missionary" is double-sided, hinging directly on the term itself, of Latin origin, "missus", meaning "sent". This therefore implies both a person sending and an aim to be fulfilled. Both preachers and followers were firmly convinced that the leaders of the community had a role for which God had chosen them, entrusting them with a specific mission. This explains their very first act of disobedience—refusing to obey the Archbishop of Lyons who forbade them to preach. The story of how their sect had begun was a familiar one in the east. This is how Stephan Bodecker, bishop of Brandenburg from 1421 to 1459, recounts it:

> This sect and heresy began in around the year 1270, which is elsewhere known under the name of the sect of the Poor of Lyons. Its

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[10] A. Patschovsky, *Quellen zur Böhmischen Inquisition im 14. Jahrhundert*, Weimar, Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, p. 204.

[11] A. Patschovsky, *Quellen zur Böhmischen Inquisition im 14. Jahrhundert*, Weimar, Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1979, pp. 26–27: „Die Verhöre geben aufschlubreiche Fingerzeige für die geistliche Versorgung der einfachen Sektenmitglieder durch ihre ‚Magister', auch einfach als ‚Herren' (*domini*) oder ‚Prediger', ‚Beichtiger', oder blob als ‚Laien' bezeichnet."

> actor and inventor was a Lyons citizen called Walden who, when he was rich, gave away all had, and wanted to observe evangelical poverty like the apostles, and he had the Gospel and certain books of the Bible written for him in the Vulgate, alongside certain sentences by saints . . . to preach with his accomplices out in the villages and the plains. These men, being unlettered, spread many errors. When the archbishop ordered them to cease, they refused, saying that it was better to obey God than men . . ."[12]

There is no doubting the fact that the idea of a mission was at the very core of the Waldensian preachers' function, even if few eastern testimonies bear this up explicitly. To be more precise, if the term "mission" or "missionary" does not occur often, the corresponding idea recurs in the believers' statements. It constantly surfaces in suspects' answers given in court. In the words of a certain Jacob, interrogated on December 10, 1392, and replying to the inquisitor's question about the reputation of Waldensian heresiarchs, "they are good men like the apostles sent by God". The same idea is found in a declaration made by a girl called Geze Gotschalczss, interrogated two weeks later: "they are good men who hold their authority from God after the apostles".[13] Thus we see how the preachers saw their role, how the followers justified their place in the community and what the religious and civil authorities found to contest. For this reason, they were more likely to be hunted down, tried and convicted.

Their first mission was to preach, to announce the Gospel. By force, things changed as time went by, and so their mission was transformed, meaning that on this point, as on so many, the Waldensians were not able to remain true to their original vocation. The move underground is the principal explanation for the change. In the early days, when they could speak openly, they sought to convert others but this gradually gave way to other more pressing needs—they had to maintain and transmit the truth amongst themselves rather than spread it. This probably accounts for the practice of individual, secret confession. Preaching and confession thus made up the Waldensian preachers' mission, as largely affirmed by the trials held both in Bohemia and Pomerania and in Fribourg.

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[12] D. Kurze, *Quellen zur Ketzergeschichte Brandenburgs und Pommerns*, Berlin-New York, Walter de Gruyter, 1975, p. 280.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 98: "bonos homines tamquam apostolos missos a Deo"; and p. 109: "bonos homines (habentes) auctoritatem a Deo post apostolos."

It was their mission as preachers that justified the existence of a group of leaders within the Waldensian community. In this instance too, we can see them scrupulously abiding by the word of the Scriptures, for Christ had ordered his apostles as follows: "Go forth and preach to all the nations" (Mat. 28, 19). Everything stems from this one command. Again, all testimonies concur on this matter, those of Waldensians questioned during judicial proceedings and those of the judiciary, who derived their information, moreover, from the former. The Brothers played a special role because they were preachers. In court records, the terms "prediger" or "praedicator" on the one hand and "praedicatio" or "praedicare" on the other figure frequently, whether to name them or to describe their role. Gallus von Neuhaus, inquisitor in Bohemia from about 1335 to 1353–5, recommended that among others, the following question should be put: "if men came to you who . . . preached".[14] While interrogating a certain Heinrich, he asked him, "if his brother was one of the preachers from the said sect."[15] On January 8, 1337, he questioned a bookseller called Heinrich in Prague; the suspect declared that his brother Rudlin was a master with the heretics . . . who listened to him preaching.[16]

At the end of the century, in Pomerania this time, the same leitmotif recurs. The inquisitor Peter Zwicker questioning Cune Conrad on November 22, 1392 asked him how often he had heard these heretics preaching.[17] The question comes back very frequently in the accounts of such proceedings. Since an affirmative answer comes in reply to a question put by the inquisitor, we might suppose it to be unreliable, even to have been forced. Yet it should also be recalled that if the question is put so very regularly, it is a reflection of inquisitorial practice and corresponds to an observed, recorded situation. This is borne out by certain suspects giving spontaneous declarations such as in the case of Tele or Alheyt, wife of Heyne

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[14] A. Patschovsky, *Quellen zur Böhmischen Inquisition im 14. Jahrhundert*, Weimar, Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, p. 199: "si veniunt homines ad vos, qui audiunt confessiones et faciunt predicationes."

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 213.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 250: "Deposuit per iuramentum, quod ipse habet fratrem unum nomine Rudlinum, qui est magister inter hereticos confitentes laicis et predicaciones audiencium."

[17] D. Kurze, *Quellen zur Ketzergeschichte Brandenburgs und Pommerns*, Berlin-New York, Walter de Gruyter, 1975, p. 80.

Vilter, from Premslaw, questioned in December 1392 or January 1393. When the inquisitor asked her what opinion she had of the heresiarchs, she replied that "they were good men like the apostles of Christ, who travel and preach in the world."[18] Similar declarations can be found, such as Grete, wife of Matthäus Joris, or Tylls, wife of Hans Sleyke, to name but these.[19]

The same message sounds through the judicial registers in Fribourg in 1430. The general theme returns again and again—the Waldensian preachers were good men. One particular turn of phrase recurs at least five times in the mouths of suspects: "the people from the said sect state and maintain that they have constantly with them in this world certain good men who preach to them, who play the part of the apostles or disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ."[20] There is never the slightest doubt in the minds of the preachers, or their followers, or indeed of the inquisitors, that the primary task of the "Brüder" was well and truly preaching. We can but share their conviction.

The Brothers' mission did not stop at preaching the Word of God. A great number of testimonies, both the inquisitors' and many from the Waldensians themselves, insist on a second feature. This comes as something of a revelation for it has been largely overlooked, by historiography in recent decades in particular. I am referring to the question of auricular confession. In effect, Catholic historiography tended to skim over it, perhaps seeking to underplay the extent of Waldensian heresy. On the other hand, Protestant historiography, always keen to present the Waldensians as predecessors if not ancestors of Reformers, passed over the matter altogether. Yet the testimonies are there, a vast number of them, all in agreement, all making the same point, all extremely reliable, in Bohemia as much as in Pomerania, where statements would seem to have been quite willingly given. The Poor of Lyons interrogated by Gallus von Neuhaus in Prague in the mid-fourteenth century admitted they confessed to the Brothers, their "Beichtiger", or confessors. A certain Heinrich, for instance, acknowledged that twice he had confessed to masters

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[18] *Ibid.*, p. 111: "Interrogata, quales ipsos (= heresiarcas) reputaverit, repondit, bonos homines sicud apostolos Christi, qui transsirent et predicarent in mundo."

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

[20] K. Utz Tremp, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Waldenser von Freiburg im Üchtland (1399–1439)*, Hannover, Hahnsche Buchandlung, 2000, pp. 455, 458, 461, 465, 468 (March, April 1430).

in the sect, and stated that his sister-in-law, Elisabeth and her sister had come to his house and also confessed to a Brother whose name he didn't know.[21]

In court records from Szczecin in 1392–1394, mention is made of a number of suspects readily admitting they had confessed once or twice a year. We find Cune Conrad, forty years of age, stating that he first confessed in his parents' home at the age of twelve.[22] Claus Thomis, aged twenty-eight, declares that he first confessed to a preacher at the age of ten or eleven, and thereafter continued to do so at least once a year.[23] There would be little point enumerating every one of the dozens of examples to be found. A single example from Pomerania can thus suffice: a deposition made by Herman Gossaw, aged about forty-five. Questioned in December 1392, he admitted that he first confessed at the age of fifteen, and he went on to name the preachers he had since confessed to: "Conrad de Doryngen, Clauss de Brandenburch, Hans von Polan, Gofrido de Ungaria, Herman de Mustelgen, Nicols von Plawen, feu Henrico, whose patronym he didn't know, Conrad de Gemunden, Ulrich von Heydek, and finally to Nicolas de Soltern."[24]

If we then turn to Fribourg, the same picture emerges. Even leaving aside those statements given in answer to an inquisitor's question that might have been twisted or forced, although this is a debatable point, the remaining, spontaneous avowals speak for themselves. Anguilla, interrogated on March 27, 1430, declared her husband had confessed three times to one of these good men. An even more revealing declaration can be found the following day, by Elsa Trogerra, for the court clerk explicitly notes that the words were "spontaneous": "she had been several times to meetings with the said perverse apostles . . . and there she confessed to them on two occasions."[25] I could go on listing examples, but there would seem to be little point.

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[21] A. Patschovsky, *Quellen zur Böhmischen Inquisition im 14. Jahrhundert*, Weimar, Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, pp. 205, 211.

[22] D. Kurze, *op. cit.*, p. 78 (November 22, 1392).

[23] D. Kurze, *op. cit.*, p. 82 (November 1392).

[24] D. Kurze, *op. cit.*, p. 89 (December 1392).

[25] K. Utz Tremp, *op. cit.*, pp. 320, 323: "Et ultra predicta sponte confessa fuit, quod ipsa fuit pluries in congregatione predictorum pervesorum apostolorum, videlicet in domo sua bina vice, et ibidem eciam eisdem fuit confessa bina vice, et semel in domo dicti Cunradi Wasen, generi sui."

It is thus an established fact: the preachers were also confessors. What we need to establish is quite what such confessions implied. Given the solemnity of the interrogation, where the stakes were high indeed, the accused would have been advised to underplay the importance of a practice taking place outside the established Church. Confession to the non-ordained was seen not only as an act of disobedience but as a profanation of the sacrament of penance. Notwithstanding, a wealth of testimonies concur on the issue: the followers clearly believed that having confessed their sins, they received real absolution, so long as they performed a number of imposed acts of penance. In the mid-fourteenth century, a suspect being questioned in Bohemia gave the following statement:

> Asked whether penance had been imposed.
> —He replied that it had.
>
> Asked whether he had performed these acts of penance that had been imposed upon him and whether he believed they would favour his salvation.
>
> —He answered yes.[26]

Defendants from Stettin refer repeatedly to the Lord's Prayer as the penance imposed upon them. Aleyd, the wife of Thyde Takken, made the following deposition concerning the preachers who had heard her confession on March 12, 1394:

> They ordered as penance that she eat but bread and water for four or five feast-days and also for the four feasts of the *Estive Quadragesime* and 50 *Pater noster* on the feast-days and 100 on Sundays, but not *Ave Maria*; they required, however, that she know *Ave Maria* because of the priests who might question her about it.[27]

Appearing in court in few days later, Peter Ostyrricher told how he was required to fast on bread and water, and to recite *Pater Noster* 20 times each day and as many times as possible on Sundays. "He undertook his penance and thought he was absolved and that this penance would help his salvation."[28] Peter Lavbruch also respected the penance imposed on him, convinced that he was thus pardoned and that it would aid his salvation: *Pater Noster* 100 times on Sunday

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[26] A. Patschovsky, *Quellen zur Böhmischen Inquisition im 14. Jahrhundert*, Weimar, Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, p. 204.
[27] D. Kurze, *op. cit.*, p. 241.
[28] D. Kurze, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

and 50 times on feast-days, not *Ave Maria*, and for ten days, to abstain from beer and fast on bread.[29] This again attests the Poor of Lyons' predilection for the Lord's Prayer and their reserve, to say the least, concerning the Angelic Salutation.

These were clearly examples of confession and absolution in the full sense of the term. One prayer from 1404 used by preachers to absolve sins goes as follows:

> May Our Lord who forgave Zacheus, Mary Magdalene and Paul, who delivered Peter from his chains and Martha and the other repentant sinners, be willing to forgive you your sins. May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord show himself to you and have pity on you. And may the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your heart and your spirit in Jesus Christ. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit bless you. Amen.[30]

If they were really forgiving sins, we should still note the different wording from that used in the Roman Church. The priest says "*Ego te absolvo . . .*" (I absolve you); the Brother just said, "May God forgive you." To the followers, however, less attentive to theological subtleties, it was clear that the preachers had the power to forgive their sins.

In other dissents, the sacrament of penance was one of the first to be contested and abandoned, for its grounding in the Scriptures was more than tenuous. The Poor of Lyons, on the other hand, kept it, in the eastern and western branches alike, as we shall see later on. The preachers thus became confessors, doubtless in answer to a deep-seated need in the community, in both psychological and religious terms. If the Brothers were more tenaciously hunted down by the authorities, it was of course because they were the leaders of a heretical dissent. But it was also on account of the fact that they preached, they heard confessions and forgave sins, despite their being laymen.

Beggars on the Road

We might be tempted to wonder whether the preachers themselves had not come to see themselves as clerics, having established themselves

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[29] D. Kurze, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

[30] Strasbourg manuscript destroyed in the fire on August 13–14, 1870; published by C. Schmidt in 1852; re-published and translated by E. Montet, *Histoire littéraire des Vaudois du Piémont*, Paris, 1885, pp. 143–144. The theological nuance is greater than it may appear, and we shall be returning to the question in chapter seven, to consider similar issues of belief and practice concerning the western community.

as a sort of parallel clergy. Might they not have passed themselves off as clergymen to their followers, or at least have deliberately maintained a certain ambiguity? The hypothesis is far from absurd: they would thus have enhanced their prestige in the community, and there are numerous examples of this sort of thing happening in other dissents. In this case, however, the query quickly founders. Testimonies are eloquent and convergent on the matter: the Waldensian preachers were laymen, and were considered as such by the Roman hierarchy who contested their ecclesiastical mission and any right whatsoever to the ministry. Furthermore, the preachers themselves were in no doubt about their lay status. Testimonies very frequently emphasise the lay character of the preachers. It comes back as a leitmotif from one suspect to the next, as they affirmed that their preachers were not clerics and had not been ordained by the bishop. Such insistence is particularly important, for during trials, it would have been in the suspects' interest to claim for example that they had not been aware of the exact status of their leaders. On the contrary, they insist on the point, confirming that they knew very well that it was laymen preaching to them and hearing their confessions. This would imply that the Brothers themselves had insisted on the differences between themselves and the Roman clergy.

They were lay preachers, no longer fully ordained as they had been in Raymond of Costa's time, although, as will be seen further on, there was a special ceremony integrating them into the brotherhood. They constituted a separate group, as clearly marked off from the clergy as they were from their followers. The followers, at least, were fully aware of the difference. Not only did they never take their preachers for Roman clerics, but they also knew they had not been ordained as priests. When questioned by the inquisitor Gallus von Neuhaus at an uncertain date between 1345 and 1349, as to whether he had known that the said masters were laymen or priests, Heinrich answered that they were laymen; he had already admitted having confessed to the supposed masters, "once to a layman in the afore-mentioned house, and to a second layman in the same house"; he later added that on a second occasion, a "lay confessor" had come to his house."[31]

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[31] A. Patschovsky, *Quellen zur Böhmischen Inquisition im 14. Jahrhundert*, Weimar, Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, pp. 203–211.

At the end of the fourteenth century, most Waldensians in Stettin acknowledged their "masters" were laymen. Herman Polan did not consider them to be priests; Tylss, wife of Hans Steckelyn, held them to be lords (*dominis*) teaching them what was good, not priests. Peter Lavburch had never considered them to be priests; Margaret, wife of Heyne Eckard, thought they were Brothers, not priests, because they had not been ordained.[32] Similarly, the followers in Fribourg were perfectly aware that their confessors were laymen. In March 1430, in answer to a certain Nesa, who had said she would loathe confessing to a layman, the priest's sister, Marguerite said, "no one should loathe confessing to them, for they stand and they go in the place of the apostles of God", a point of view equally defended by Katharine.[33]

Again, there are dozens of examples, but it would seem pointless to cite more. Clearly, the Brothers were laymen; they did not attempt to pass themselves off as anything other, and their followers were perfectly aware of this. The case of Friedrich Reiser, who asked to be ordained by a Czech bishop, would appear to be an exceptional case illustrating the Hussite influence on the Poor of Lyons in fifteenth-century Bohemia.[34] Nonetheless, despite the prestige and sacred, semi-magical character of the priesthood, and despite the Brothers' belonging to the laity, which was clearly announced and visibly understood, devotees continued to have faith and confidence in their masters. The esteem and veneration the latter inspired were the result of the harsh lives they chose to lead.

Their impoverished lifestyle was the outward sign that guaranteed the authenticity of the Brothers' mission. One simple rule was binding and absolute: for the Waldensian preachers, ownership of material goods, in whatever shape or kind, was prohibited. While their people, over the centuries, gradually acquired possessions, as landowners in particular, the preachers stood firm by the original precept laid down by the "Poor of Lyons". They thus remained true to one of the tenets established by Vaudès and his companions, and were

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[32] D. Kurze, *op. cit.*, pp. 214 (March 4, 1393), 207 (February 27, 1393), 253 (March 21, 1394) and 203 (February 26, 1393).

[33] K. Utz Tremp, *op. cit.*, pp. 303, 349.

[34] On Friedrich Reiser, see A. de Lange, K. Utz Tremp, Hrsg., *Friedrich Reiser und die « waldensisch-hussitische Internationale » im 15. Jahrhundert*, Ubstadt-Weiher, Verlag regional kultur, 2006.

always beggars. Many followers admitted they had given lodgings to the Brothers and offered them hospitality. Margarete, for example, declared on January 26, 1393 that, "for nine or ten years, she had had them come to her house and she had given them food and drink; when she had been unable to do so, her mother had done it."[35]

As well as offering hospitality, it became customary to offer a sort of donation or gift. A certain number of depositions describe how money had been given to the "master", such as one by Margarete, apparently the same as the one quoted above: she had given them 37 marks, and then another 11 marks in accordance with the will of her late husband. Similarly, Tele Doryncsh, interrogated the next day, affirmed that she had been offering hospitality to the Brothers for twenty years, "and she had given them food and drink, and her mother had sometimes given them money." Another deposition, made by the widow Grite Haversche, tells how, as well as hospitality, "she had given them money, a mark or sometimes less, depending on her means."[36] One prisoner, a certain Peter, admitted that in all he had given them 20 marks, which would go, "to the poor, for the love of God."[37] As for Hennyng Fricze, "he gave them two or three marks, and in all, he had given 8 marks in the same year, in keeping with his wife's will, so they would pray to God for her."[38] There is thus no doubting the fact that thanks to their followers' generosity, the Brothers lived by their gifts, in terms of shelter and money, some of which was then given to the poor.

The itinerant nature of the preachers' mission, to which we shall have cause to return when we tackle the western branch of preachers, was both an answer and a sign of adaptation to the dispersion of Waldensian families. They tended to settle in groups in new villages, sometimes coming to make up the majority or even the totality of the population. We find examples of this happening in Austria, Pomerania, in Piedmont, the Dauphiné, and later in Apulia, Calabria, Provence or the Comtat Venaissin. Waldensian villages also came to form clusters across certain regions, as in the Luberon, the Alps, southern Italy and Brandenburg. These clusters, however, were some-

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[35] D. Kurze, *op. cit.*, p. 117: "Per 9 vel 10 annos eos hospitavit, et quod dederit eis comedere et bibere, et quando non habuit, tunc mater eius fecerit."
[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 118, 125, 134.
[37] *Ibid.*, p. 172.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 179.

times far-flung making contact between them difficult, while other Waldensian villages could not fit into any coherent pattern or group. Other Waldensians settled in remote, distant areas, dispersed in hamlets or even remote dwellings. In this way, the Waldensian community was doubly broken up: first, on a European scale, as a diaspora; second, on a regional scale into small communities or isolated homesteads.

The risks of such dispersion are easy to gauge, for it would have been increasingly difficult to maintain the unity of the community and the tenets of the faith. It was with both these challenges in mind that the preachers became itinerant. Their itinerant missions would of course have to be scrupulously organised and coordinated, so that no community risked being left out while others received far more frequent visits. An itinerary, that would be more or less precise, was thus entrusted to the preachers as they set out on their missions, heading off towards their flocks. We must thus suppose there was a certain amount of coordination or direction. We have little to go by as far as distances to be covered are concerned, although a few examples have survived. Whether these are typical or exceptional, however, is a matter of speculation.

The example of the preacher aptly named Friedrich Reiser, to whom we referred earlier, is a case in point. Originally from Souabe, he journeyed out visiting Brothers across the whole Germanic territory in the early fifteenth century, from Basel and Fribourg in Switzerland to Brandenburg, from Strasbourg to Prague.[39] He can be found in Cracow in 1431, in Basel in 1432 for the council, then in Tabor in Bohemia in 1450. He was finally arrested by the Inquisition in Strasbourg in early 1458. Having told his life-story during the trial, he denounced several Brothers under torture before he abjured. He was then delivered to the secular arm and burnt at the stake on March 6, 1458. His story was exceptional, in more ways than one. His life as an itinerant, however, was typical of the Waldensian mission.

[39] V. Vinay, "Friedrich Reiser e la diaspora valdese di lingua tedesca nel XV° secolo", *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi*, n. 109, June 1961, pp. 35–56.

Good Men

While the preachers' itinerant mission came in answer to the needs of a scattered community, there is no doubting the fact that it also reflected the strategic clandestinity adopted by the Waldensian community. If the followers in general had chosen to hide their dissent so as to survive, they also had to find ways to dissimulate their preachers, whom the authorities were particularly keen to track down as "heresiarchs", deeming them more dangerous and more to blame than the others. Most testimonies bear witness to the secrecy surrounding the Brothers' itinerant mission. An instance in Bohemia illustrates the point: a statement given by Heinrich, telling of the preacher who visited him in his home. He told the inquisitor how, "he always came by night and set off again by night" and then, speaking about the Brothers in general, he confirmed that "they come mostly secretly and leave again most secretly". He later adds a telling detail, "each time he came to his house by night, and stayed the whole of the next day until nightfall, then, surreptitiously, he set off into the night."[40]

Statements taken in Pomerania in 1392–1394 equally refer to meetings taking place in hiding, with followers confessing, "in the house", "in a bedroom", "in the pantry", "in the salt house", "in the attic", the implication being that this was in secret, even if it is not explicitly mentioned. Mette, however, the widow of Tyde Balken, said of the Brothers, "that she had taken them into her house, the men who came by night."[41] In Fribourg, on June 22, 1430, Catherine, wife of Rolet Bulen, affirmed that she had heard another woman saying that "the preachers of the said sect preached in hidden corners and in secret." The same formula had occurred in another woman's statement, in French this time, a year before, when "fat Surera" recounted the conversation she had had with Anguilla; she purportedly protested, saying, "they should not preach in secret and in corners, for it is forbidden, and the holy apostles were martyred when they preached openly."[42]

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[40] A. Patschovsky, *Quellen zur Böhmischen Inquisition im 14. Jahrhundert*, Weimar, Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, pp. 209, 211.

[41] D. Kurze, *op. cit.*, p. 150: "Et quod semel ipsos hospitaverit de nocte venientes" (February 7, 1393).

[42] Kathrin Utz Tremp, *op. cit.*, p. 565: "quod predicatores dicte secte predicabant in cornetis et in occulto"; and p. 326 respectively.

Such a life in hiding clearly raised problems in terms of principle. The inquisitors lost no time picking up on the issue, quoting liberally from the Gospels to show that the truth could not and should not be hidden. The clandestine mission also raised another difficulty for preachers, in far more practical terms: how were they to escape notice of outsiders, while remaining identifiable for those within the community? A technique was thus refined that fulfilled both objectives, described in one deposition made in Fribourg to which we shall return later.[43] Whatever the case, the men who embarked on their missions lived dangerously, in permanent fear of being recognised and denounced. This was a far cry from the serenity and security enjoyed by the Roman clergy.

All the above characteristics of the eastern preachers' mission can be found among their western counterparts, as we shall see further on. There remains, however, one feature of the "Brüder" that was restricted to the eastern branch, an original trait referred to in no sources on the western preachers; this concerned the voyage into the hereafter. The followers from Pomerania interrogated in Stettin ascribe a peculiar attribute to the Brothers. A good number of the countryfolk called to give testimonies maintained that the preachers' message and their pastoral action were guaranteed by the journey they allegedly made "before" or "in" paradise where they listened to God's word in order to receive authority and wisdom from God or an interceding angel. The frequency of such voyages varies from one declaration to the next: yearly, according to some; or more frequently, and here the symbolic value of the number is clear, "seven in seven years". The Waldensians' belief in their Brothers' journey to paradise is attested in Austria and Bavaria in the first half of the fourteenth century. The myth was enriched with two further details found in two declarations. The first specifies that their return was realised "in diverse tribulations, by the fields, in the thorns". The

[43] Kathrin Utz Tremp, *op. cit.*, p. 326, deposition by Surera, August 10, 1429: "Item demandast ly dicte Surera a la dicte Anguilla coment lour poent savoir quant lour vignioent ensemble. Disist que quant les pregiour vignoent ensemble que une femme appalee Grede 'mit der nasen' alave ver lour trestot et lour diseitt: 'il sont venuz per que venei', et adonques lour savoent l'oura". [Item the said Surera asked the said Anguilla how they could know when they were coming together. She said that when the preachers came together, a woman called Grede "mit den nasen" came early to see them and announced, 'they have come so you may come to them' and so they knew which time"].

journey would thus be a kind of ritual initiation to conquer good by withstanding evil, thus acquiring a spiritual prize which they could pass on to their believers. The theme is taken up in a fuller deposition by Aleyd, the wife of Thyde Takken, from Baumgarten near Könisberg:

> Two of these apostolic Brothers and heresiarchs came before hell and heard the wretched clamour and saw the devils bearing souls to hell and saying: "this one committed adultery, this one was a usurer, this one was an innkeeper", and likewise other sorts of vices of the souls. Then they went before paradise and heard the voice of the Lord God giving them wisdom and doctrine, which they should transmit to the men who were entrusted to them on earth.[44]

Aleyd had learned these beliefs from another woman, in the oral tradition. The inquisitor considered her a simple-hearted woman [*simplicem*]. The value of her statement would be merely anecdotal if it only cropped up once. What is striking is that it recurs in at least thirteen different depositions, which makes it far more eloquent.[45] It reveals the folklore with which these populations were imbued. It shows us how cultural folklore and religion mutually inspired each other. Was this belief "heretical"? On a doctrinal level, it was doubly heretical: neither Roman clerics nor Brothers would have recognised themselves in these strange travellers acquiring truth from Heaven. On a psychological level, it justified the clandestine preaching that was officially prohibited. It confronts us with one of the great, profound realities of cultural folklore in the rural populations of pre-industrial Europe. It evokes the ritual progression of shamanic initiation in traditional stages: a traumatising experience that the shaman manages to overcome followed by the revelation of his supernatural powers. There is nothing so surprising in the fact that certain peasants transposed the myth into the religious field and that the Poor of Lyons applied it to the Brothers.

The goodness of the preachers as described in the Waldensians' testimonies comes back, unchallenged, time and again. In answer to the inquisitor's question, "What opinion do you have of these heresiarchs?" the same reply can be heard, unerring, enthusiastic even, which is surprising for more reasons than one. The preachers had

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[44] D. Kurze, *op. cit.*, p. 241.
[45] D. Kurze, *op. cit.*, pp. 113, 208, 222–225, 229–231, 241–242, 247–248.

chosen a life that was rough indeed, earning them unanimous praise from their devotees even during questioning. All followers everywhere spoke most highly of their masters. They evoked their apostolic lives. They spoke of them as "good and holy men who fasted often and chastised themselves", as Hans Spigilman said in Stettin in 1394.[46] From Pomerania to Strasbourg, they are called "good men", "honest men" and seen quite simply as saints. Testimonies given during trials are constantly paying tribute to their goodness. Essential as their asceticism was, however, ensuring the profound and widespread respect of their followers and establishing their unchallenged status in the community, it does not account alone for their reputation. They were also seen to have been sent by God. It was their divine mission and their personal asceticism together, two inseparable elements, that gave them authority and avouched for them. In Jakob Hildebrand's words, the preachers "went out across lands in the manner of the apostles, with the God-given power to remit sins"; according to Sophia, "they are good men, sent by God, like the apostles, with the authority to preach, hear confessions, absolve sins, impose penance better than priests," and she believes they are priests, not consecrated by the rites of the Bishop of Kamen and they have not been sent by the bishop. Grete, the wife of Jakob Beyer, explains that, "they come from what the Lord said: Go out across the whole world, and so they have the power to preach, to hear confessions, to absolve sins and give penance, better than priests and they are better men than the priests of the Church." Peter Beyer declares, "they are honest and upright men, who come from God and from no one else do they hold the power to hear confessions and preach and he believes that, better than priests, they can forgive sins." There is little need to go on; the words of Peter Lavbruch quoting the man who introduced him into the sect give an apt last word on the question: "he said that they were men who had Christian truth, who went across the land in the manner of the apostles, and who could forgive sins better than priests could."[47]

The spontaneous, unanimous praise is all the more remarkable, all the more telling, considering that such declarations were made at the decisive, dramatic time of their trials. Suspects would have had every reason to spurn their preachers, laying the blame for any

[46] D. Kurze, *op. cit.*, p. 237 (March 12, 1394).
[47] D. Kurze, *op. cit.*, pp. 113, 219, 223, 172 and 253.

heresy on them alone, accusing them of having led the poor folk astray. The inquisitors and judges, so thoroughly schooled as they were in the principles of hierarchy, would have been only too willing to hear and accept such arguments. It is thus an eloquent tribute to the eastern Brothers.

Immediately after the founding period, in Vaudès' lifetime, during which only southern regions were involved, the expansion of the Poor of Lyons meant they quickly came to span two linguistic zones, one speaking French, the other *langue d'oc*. The relatively short length of time during which this continued (one century approximately) and the basic proximity of the two Latin-derived languages meant the community could still be maintained without any major problems. The emergence of a few groups on the Lorraine and Rhineland boundaries created a peripheral phenomenon. As they spread eastwards into Germany in the fourteenth century, a third zone opened up which, far from being negligible, came to represent the main body in terms of numbers, particularly in Austria. The diaspora, across almost the whole of Europe, thus counted three bodies: France; Provence and Italy; and Germany. As a result both of the common ground linking French and the *langue d'oc*, and especially of the original bases in France being diminished, the community of Brothers came to be divided essentially into two branches, one western, speaking the *langue d'oc*, the other eastern, speaking German. The cleft between the two was already perceptible at the end of the fourteenth century and its effects became more apparent as time went by.

What was initially no more than a language difference gradually developed into a split in sensibility and finally into mutual, good-natured ignorance which is doubtless worse than open conflict. This unawareness of the other side of the cleft, even if it was not total, was at least habitual. Only in particularly dramatic moments or exceptional circumstances can any exchange be traced between the Poor of Lyons in the west and their Brothers in the east. Friedrich Reiser, for example, was in contact with the Alpine division and Luke of Prague travelled to Italy in 1495 to visit Rome and also the Brothers from central Italy.[48] Representatives from the Alpine

[48] On Luke of Prague, see Giovanni Gonnet & Amedeo Molnar, *Les vaudois au Moyen Age*, Torino, Claudiana, pp. 276–280; 361–363. A. Molnar has devoted many articles to Luke of Prague in *Communio viatorum*, Praha; see bibliography in *ibid*., pp. 475–476.

and Czech communities would appear to have assembled at the beginning of the sixteenth century. While these meetings do bear witness to certain, shared features in the two communities, they also suggest that these were rather tenuous, even exceptional. On both sides of the divide, members recalled the existence of Brothers elsewhere, but there would seem to have been little reason to believe they belonged to the same community, the same religious family. It would appear most doubtful and personally, I do not ascribe to the idea of closer, inter-communal links. As we shall see when we consider how the brethren were organised, each of the two divisions had its own, separate body of preachers.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TIME OF THE BARBES

Truly ye bear witness.
Luke 11, 48

So far our study has evoked the Waldensian diaspora in general, its origins, the source material we can draw on, and the manner of organisation, focusing on the eastern Brothers to avoid overlooking an essential, international dimension of the movement. I now invite my reader to turn with me to the Waldensians' western preachers, whose lives and beliefs are far better known than those of their eastern counterparts.

The documents we can draw on to explore the community in the west are first and foremost the records from the many judicial proceedings in the Dauphiné in 1487 and 1488 during which the believers spoke at length about their preachers. In 1488, for example, Pons Brunet, François and Jean Bret, and Jean Anthoard, all four from Freissinières, were cross-examined. A collection of other records from Waldensian trials or interrogations, admittedly less localised, have also survived. Among those most likely to interest us here, where mention is made of their preachers, we find the following: first, the cross-examination of Philippe Regis in 1451, more unusual because he was a lieutenant or deputy of sorts. Pierre Valoy, from Saint-André near Embrun in the Dauphiné, questioned in 1489, speaks of the preachers. The Valentinois region, around Valence, equally in the Dauphiné, provides some information, such as the cross-examinations of Monet Rey, from Saint-Mamans, and of Peyronette, from Beauregard, in 1494. In 1526, Jacques Ressent, a Waldensian from Bec Dauphin, near Perosa, in the Chisone valley in Piedmont, was taken in for questioning. Meanwhile, Jean de Roma's anti-Waldensian treatise written in 1533 is particularly well-documented because the inquisitor had officiated against the Provençal communities and had himself interrogated two preachers; he therefore had direct experience of the cases he was investigating. He gives detailed accounts of the eight sessions during which he interrogated Pierre Griot. Besides

this account of a preacher's trial, two others have survived, detailing the proceedings against Francesco of Girundino and Giovanni of Jacopo held in 1492 in Oulx (Dauphinois Alps); and against the Provençal master Jean Serre of Murs, who finally recanted in 1539. The most precious testimony is the Morel and Masson report, in which the two preachers speak freely of the pastoral body to which they belong. Our knowledge of the Brothers from the west is determined by these documents, some of which are hand-written and hitherto unpublished.[1]

An Authorised Testimony

Even such a brief outline of the types of document we can draw on to glean information about the preachers makes it clear that one source in particular is of special interest. It will not have escaped the reader that all except one of the testimonies mentioned emanate from the Waldensians' persecutors, by which I mean that they were elicited by the civil or religious authorities hunting down the heretics. One document, however, was actually written by the Waldensians, and even better as far as we are concerned, by the preachers themselves. This is the Morel and Masson report, which for this reason alone, deserves to be considered separately.

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[1] First amongst these is the series relating to the Alpine valleys in the Dauphiné where Alberto Cattaneo led prosecutions in 1487–1488, during which hundreds of Waldensians were questioned: Archives départementales de l'Isère, B 4350, 4351. Les quatre vaudois de Freissinières: J. Chevalier, *Mémoire historique sur les Hérésies en Dauphiné avant le XVI^e^ siècle*, Valence, Jules Céas et fils, 1890, pp. 145–152 (Latin). Concerning individual trials, we find Philippe Rey (Regis): W. Weitzecker, "Processo di un valdese nell'anno 1451", *Rivista Cristiana*, 1881, pp. 363–367 (Latin). Pierre Valoy: J. Marx, *L'inquisition en Dauphiné*, Paris, Champion, 1914; Marseille, Laffitte Reprints, 1978, pp. 244–254 (Latin). Monet Rey, pp. 155–157 (Latin). Peyronette: E. Arnaud, *Mémoires historiques sur . . . les vaudois du Dauphiné*, Crest, 1896, pp. 32–44 (translated into French). Jacques Ressent: G. Marini Nevache, "Verbale dell'interrogatorio di Iacopo Ressent di Bec Dauphin accusato di eresia", *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi*, n. 186, Giugno 2000, pp. 3–34 (Latin and translated into Italian). Treatise by Jean of Roma: Archives Nationales, Paris, J 851, n. 2, ff° 1–32 v° (Latin); trial of Pierre Griot: *ibid.*, ff° 167–223 v°: G. Audisio, *Le Barbe et l'inquisiteur. Procès du Barbe vaudois Pierre Griot par l'inquisiteur Jean de Roma (Apt, 1532)*, Aix-en-Provence, Edisud, 1979. Francesco of Girundino and Giovanni of Jacopo: M. Benedetti, "L'interrogatorio dei barba Martino e Pietro (1492)", G. Tourn, *Il barba*, XVII febbraio 2001, Torino, Claudiana, 2001, pp. 53–62 (Translated into Italian). Jean Serre: Bibliothèque Inguimbertiine Carpentras, Secretariatus, Ms 1358, n. 2, ff° 522–523 and Ms 1359, ff° 356–360. Rapport Morel: V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede dei valdesi riformati*, Torino, Claudiana, 1975, pp. 36–51.

First, the conditions in which it was drawn up. During the 1520s, with the emergence and spread of the Reformation, first in Germany prompted by Martin Luther, then in various European countries, the Waldensians were brought to question their own religious tradition. They sought contacts with various Reformers, first indirectly by studying their works, and then in person. It was to this purpose that two leaders, Georges Morel from Freissinières, and Pierre Masson from Burgundy, were sent as an official delegation to the Reformers in Switzerland and Germany, both to present their community and to ask a number of questions concerning contentious issues for which they sought enlightenment. They thus went to Neuchâtel, where Guillaume Farel was living, to Morat, to Berne where they met Berthold Haller, then on to Basel to meet Oecolampadius before travelling to Strasbourg to encounter Wolfgang Capitan and Martin Bucer. On their return they drew up a report of their mission in Basel and Strasbourg, presenting the Waldensian community, listing the questions set to the Reformers and noting down their answers. The full report, in Latin, then the international language which the two Waldensians visibly mastered, has survived; they also translated it into *langue d'oc*, doubtless for their Latinless Brothers.[2]

In other words, this document presenting the Waldensian community was composed freely and confidently, for they were addressing themselves. The following example, albeit a lengthy one, deserves to be read in full, for not only do the preachers speak of themselves, but they do so willingly and spontaneously, thus guaranteeing their reliability. At this point, we will listen to what Georges Morel has to say, without interrupting the passage to pass comment; this we shall be doing in later chapters:

> All those who are to be received amongst us, but who are still with their families for the time, must first kneel to ask admittance, quite simply as a show of humility; they ask, I tell you, those of us whom they meet and who have already been received, to admit them to the ministry, if they will, and to intercede with God on their behalf, so that they might be deemed worthy of so great a ministry. Then, when we meet together, we transmit their request to the brothers who are present, and if we can speak favourably of them, and if all the brothers are in agreement, they are admitted for instruction. Now, the recipiendaries are almost without exception from the class of shepherds or agricultural labourers. They are aged between twenty-five and, more

[2] Dublin, Trinity College, MS 259.

frequently, thirty, and are completely illiterate. If their behaviour is irreproachable, we put them to the test for three or four years, but only during the two to three winter months, during which we teach them to spell and to read, and we have them learn by heart all the chapters of Matthew and John, the so-called canonical epistles and a good part of Paul. Following this, the above-mentioned recipiendaries are taken to a particular place, where several of our women whom we call "sisters" live in celibacy. Here they live for one year, sometimes two, and they work, mostly on earthly labours I must admit in all sincerity. When this time has come to an end, the said disciples are admitted to the office of presbyter and preacher by the sacrament of the Eucharist and laying on of hands; then, having been taught and instructed in this manner, they are sent out in twos to evangelise.

We observe the following custom however; he who has been received first is wholly and always ahead of he who comes later, in terms of honour, dignity and the ministry, and is established as his master. He who follows will not dare, without the permission of he who went first, touch anything, be it ever so slight, such as drinking water. Meanwhile, we do not consider it to be a sin if he who comes after does not do as has been said; yet, since everything must be done honestly, and in respect of order, we do practise what has just been described.

None of us gets married. And yet, to speak openly and sincerely (for I do speak to you with much trust) we are not always treated chastely. Food and clothing are provided freely, in ample quantities, as alms given by the folk we instruct. We engage in various manual labours to condescend to the people and to avoid idleness; but it must be said that we are unduly taken up by them and so we neglect the Scriptures. Every morning and every evening, before and after meals, at midday and sometimes by night, when we are awake, and after preaching before an assembly of people, we are accustomed to kneel and pray, in all humility, for the space of a quarter of an hour approximately; and when we wish to drink or eat, we nearly all say the Lord's Prayer. And in truth, we do not pray thus out of superstition or from vain faith, or to respect a given time: we are driven by the glory of God and the usefulness of the soul. All our temporal goods, which are quite abundant as a result of alms from the folk mentioned above, as I said earlier, ensure we eat abundantly, and we ministers share this amongst ourselves. The living, and often those who are at the article of death, offer us a lot of money and other goods, but I never have the heart to accept anything from the dying. On this point, as on many others, I ask your opinion.

We ministers meet all together once a year to consider our affairs in a general council, and we change our places of residence two by two, for we never stay more than two or three years in the same place, unless where old men are concerned, whom we sometimes allow to

> stay in the same place until the end of their lives. Furthermore, all the money that is given us by our people is put in common during the said general council and taken in by our leaders. A part of it is allotted to travelling, according to what our leaders consider necessary, the rest is sometimes handed out to the poor. Before leaving the said council, we ask forgiveness for our faults, each in turn. When someone has committed a carnal sin, he is expelled from our society. He is forbidden to preach, and we order him to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. On this point too, I expressly ask your opinion.
>
> This is how things fare amongst us, the ministers. We are in great need, on these matters, for the light of your mind, such as I have known it and learnt of it since I arrived in this country.[3]

The report then turns to the presentation of the Waldensians' beliefs and practices. Just two short passages in this section are directly related to the preachers' activities:

> We consider auricular confession of sins to be useful, but without respecting any particular time, and only following the orders of the Holy Scriptures, to bring help and consolation to the weak and the ignorant who seek advice . . .
>
> When we preach, two of us sit down together; the older man speaks first, the other follows.[4]

This is how Morel presents the body of preachers to which he belonged. The testimony is precious indeed and should be kept in mind for we will be referring back to it later. For the time being, we will have a closer look at those men who, in religious matters, guided the Waldensian population.

Why a "Barbe"?

Our first question must be one of method and again concerns the use of names. Indeed, just as we pondered the label "Waldensian" earlier, and the names by which the eastern Brothers came to be

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[3] V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede dei valdesi riformati*, Torino, Claudinana, 1975, pp. 36–40, text in Latin alongside translation in Italian. The English translation relies too on the French translation given by E. Arnaud, *Mémoires historiques sur . . . les vaudois du Dauphiné*, Crest, 1896, pp. 4–6.

[4] E. Arnaud, *Mémoires historiques sur . . . les vaudois du Dauphiné*, Crest, 1896, pp. 7–8.

known, so too we need to know how best to identify the Waldensian preachers from the western side of the diaspora. Did they have a particular name, or was there a series of names by which they could be designated? In fact, unlike their counterparts in Central or Eastern Europe, the Waldensians from the Romance lands did not call their preachers "Brothers", or "lords", but "barbes". The term features apparently for the first time in a mid-fifteenth century document, recounting the judicial proceedings led by the Dominican inquisitor Fauzons de Reys against Philippe Rey from Saint Martin valley in Piedmont on October 20 1451 in Pinerolo. It is important to consider how this term first appears. It features right at the beginning of the proceedings. After taking oath, the inquisitor asks the suspect to state all that he had said during his trial. The question is thus broad and open. Philippe Rey replies:

> (. . .) That it is true that he has confessed once at his home to one of the *barbes* called Waldensians and the master of the sect of the Waldensians, which master was brought to his said house by a man called Etienne Rigoti from the parish of Saux.
> Asked the name by which this barbe was known,
> —Replied he was called *le gros Amchel de Fassiniere*.[5]

Strictly speaking, the term "barbe" was not the sole term used to designate Waldensian preachers. Pierre Griot, for example, in 1532, speaks of "masters of this sect called Jean, Laurent, Georges, Jeannon and others whose names he can't remember".[6] In other words, we can find instances of the terms master, preacher and predicator being used. Nevertheless, in most sources, the Brother is called a "barbe", whether by the preachers speaking thus about themselves, by their followers, or by the judges and inquisitors.

The term used thus only appeared in their community in the fifteenth century.[7] It then came into popular usage, later documents

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[5] W. Weitzecker, "Processo di un valdese nell'anno 1451", *Rivista Cristiana*, 1881, pp. 363–367, p. 364.

[6] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur. Procès du barbe vaudois Pierre Griot par l'inquisiteur Jean de Roma (Apt, 1532)*, Aix-en-Provence, Edisud, 1979, p. 107.

[7] G. Gonnet & A. Molnar, *Les vaudois au Moyen Age*, Torino, Claudiana, p. 142, speak of a barbe at an era well before this: "At the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Barbe Martin Pastre, before ending his life in the prisons of Marseilles, laboured relentlessly for more than twenty years in the lands which extend from Pignerol to Saluces and beyond as far as the county of Nice". In this case, however, it is an extrapolation, for the original documents do not use the word "barbe".

referring to preachers in this way during the last century of the Poor of Lyons' existence. The term can be found in trials, Jean de Roma's treatise, the 1533 Warning (*avertissement*) issued by the *Parlement of Provence* and in Jacques Aubéry's defence speech in 1551. Giovanni of Jacopo and Francesco of Girundino arrested in 1492, Georges Morel and Pierre Masson sent as envoys to the Reformers, Jean Serre from Murs and Jean Gérault from Embrun, Pierre Griot and innumerable others quoted in various documents are all referred to, and refer to themselves as "barbes". If the term does mean "uncle", the meaning which persisted was neither the French "oncle" nor the provençal 'ouncle' but the sense denoted in the Piedmont vernacular. It is thus an indication of how important Piedmont had become in the western diaspora, for a vocabulary is always more revealing than one might think. Piedmont had pre-empted the Dauphiné, Provence, Calabria and Apulia as the Poor of Lyons' principal bastion.

The term requires an explanation. It is of Romance origin. Frédéric Mistral in his dictionary gives two meanings. The first entry reads as follows: "ome barba: homme à Barbe, sensé, expérimenté"; [a bearded man, of good sense, experienced]. He goes on to give the following definition: "A respectful title given to an elder in a community or to an uncle in the Piedmont Alps and in the county of Nice".[8] In fact, even now, "uncle" in the Piedmont dialect is "barba". In 1530, Pierre Griot referred to a preacher with whom he had travelled as "Uncle Georges". When, by night, preachers arrived in Tourettes, a hamlet near Apt, a messenger went to inform Jean Tasquier that "the uncles had arrived." The term in fact has a broader meaning. Even today in Provence, an elder in a village is frequently called "ouncle", a name which is both respectful and affectionate. The word was therefore not unfamiliar in the cultural environment at the time; it was just transposed into the religious field. In this way, a believer could announce the uncles' arrival, as did the messenger from Tourettes, without necessarily arousing people's suspicions. One of the characteristics of the Poor of Lyons is

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The inquisitor Albert of Castellario refers to him as "principalis et generalis predicator" (principal and general predicator); he is also called "magister" (master) or "seygnor": G. G. Merlo, *Eretici e inquisitori nella società piemontese del trecento*, Torino, Claudiana, 1977, pp. 42, 57, 201, 204, 223.

[8] F. Mistral, *Lou Tresor dou felibrige*, 2 v., Aix-en-Provence, Remondet-Aubin, 1882–1886.

that they adopted this term for their leaders and were alone to do so. Thus, even in Fribourg, which I classified for reasons stated earlier in the eastern side of the diaspora but which, as we saw, constituted a transitional zone, the term "barbe" is not found. On the other hand, the word "uncle" figures once. This is during the cross-examination of Marguerite Studerra, on April 2, 1430. Questioned about one particular preacher, she declared:

> Her mother had taken her to a house "à la Roubine" for him to teach her his belief, and they told her it there. So, when they were in the said house, her mother said to her about him, "you must say to this stranger, welcome, uncle". But she was very young.[9]

It is revealing too, if we go beyond the Romance usage of the term "uncle" in a laudatory sense, to bear in mind the fact that, even to this day, the word is used in the same way in a number of countries. In the Friuli dialect, "barbe" or "barba" means uncle, as it does in Slovenia: "Barba Vigo" means Uncle Vincent. As for the familiar and honorific sense of the word, it has persisted in certain Spanish-speaking countries as "tio"; in Greece from medieval times until the present, we find the same word, "barba", that may have come from the west; similarly in Slav countries, as in "Uncle Vanya", for example. Such usage can even be found in Burma, where "U" (uncle) is apposed before the name of those deemed worthy, and "Daw" for women. There is thus a widely attested use of the word "uncle" to signify not a family tie but an honorific title. As for the word "barbe" itself, its usage always falls within those territories defined by the Romance languages.[10]

The question we must ask, therefore, is why Morel, in his presentation of the community to Oecolampadius and Bucer quoted

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[9] See E. Comba, *Histoire des vaudois*, Paris, Fischbacher, 1901, pp. 585–589. K. Utz Tremp, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Waldenser von Freiburg im Üchtland (1399–1439)*, Hannover, Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2000, p. 496: "Sed in domo, a la Rubina, ad quam eius mater eam ducebat; subiungens quod dicta eius mater ipsam illuc ducebat, ut addisceret illam credenciam et que ibi dicebantur. Cui tunc, quando fuerunt in dicta domo, dicta eius mater dixit: Tu debes dicere isti straneo 'Bene veneritis, avuncule'. Sed ipsa erat valde iuvenis."

[10] Slovenia: information provided by Mr Vincent Goznik (Nîmes, France); Spanish: travels in Bolivia and Peru (2005); Greece: information provided by Mr Michel Balivet, Université de Provence (1994); Slav countries: Primo Levi, *Maintenant ou jamais*, Torino, Einaudi, 1982; Paris, Laffont, 1998, pp. 85, 86, 140; Birmania: Antoine Perraud, "Une femme contre la tyrannie", *Telerama*, n. 2387, 11 octobre 1995.

above, never used the word "barbe" to refer to the Waldensian preachers? The term, as we have seen, was not by any means pejorative. In this case, however, the barbe himself preferred to use the word "minister", which occurs three times in the passage cited in full. The explanation may well be quite simple. The Reformers to whom the barbes were speaking were men of letters, Latiners and most often German-speakers, all of whom, with the exception of Farel, knew nothing at all of the *langue d'oc*. It would doubtless have been rather long-winded to explain the meaning of the Romance term, "barbe". For this reason, Morel would more likely have preferred a traditional, generic term, one used indeed as much in the Catholic world as in Reformation discourse and practice. In other words, the absence of the word "barbe", in the Morel report, need not throw into question the widespread, habitual use of the term within the Waldensian community.[11]

This explanation can be maintained for the time being. We will return to the question in chapters to come, when evoking the way of life and mission of the barbes. Our preachers were barbes. When a man is referred to thus by the Waldensians themselves, we can presume we are dealing with a preacher. It is no mean task, however, to draw up a list of such barbes. The first obstacle is one that crops up whenever one tries to define the Waldensians, and all the more so when one focuses on the leaders, for they lived in hiding. And just as they managed for so long to escape the sight of the authorities in their own time, so they tend to escape ours. Prudence is called for when an inquisitor calls a Waldensian a *barbe*. At the same time, he had little to gain by being mistaken, but then he, too, could have been led into error. Our task is complicated further by the fact that a man could be called André Barbe, for example, where Barbe is a surname, but he might also be the Barbe André. The risk is slight, however, for the name by baptism is very systematically given first.

The other difficulty is that most often, we know the barbes by their Christian name alone. Indeed, although nothing is stated in the Morel report about the question, and as we shall be seeing later on, the barbes received a name when they were first admitted, and

[11] See T. Pons, "Barba, Barbi et Barbetti nel tempo e nello spazio", *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi*, n. 122, Dicembre 1967, pp. 47–76.

were henceforth called and known by that name alone. This means that the archives we have refer to the barbes only by these acquired names; mention is sometimes made of their place of origin. It is thus extremely difficult to identify them with certitude and to distinguish barbes with the same name.

By conflating all available sources, both printed and in manuscript, I have attempted to draw up a list of barbes that we will now peruse in an attempt to gain an overall view of the body of preachers in the western community of Waldensians.

A Cross-Section

When all sources are brought together, and once uncertain references believed to be made to one and the same person have been left out, the total number of barbes I could thus index came to 116. The testimony made by G. Miolo refers to 140 barbes meeting at the synod of Laux, which he states took place in 1526.[12] This cross-section, while not being wholly representative as will be seen later, can nevertheless be considered a fair reflection of how things really stood. Of the 116 barbes I listed, 114 are known by at least one of three possible names: that as a barbe, the baptismal name and a patronymic. Some are known only by their name as barbe, which happens always to be a Christian name, as saints' names were chosen. It would be fastidious here to go through the list one after the other and explain why a certain "Beremond" has been excluded, on the grounds that he is probably the same as "Bermond" and why a certain "Johannon" has been kept, on the presumption that he is not the same as "Jean" and "Jeannet". A single example can suffice. G. Miolo, writing in the late-sixteenth century, refers in his list of barbes to a certain "Martino di Meana" but does not situate him chronologically. Meanwhile, during my own research, I came across a Provençal Waldensian from Murs, Nicolas Serre, cross examined on September 14, 1540, denouncing a certain Martin for being a heretical preacher heard preaching against purgatory. Could it be

[12] G. Miolo, *Historia breve & vera de gl'affari de i Valdesi delle Valli*, a cura di E. Balmas, Torino, Claudiana, 1971, p. 100; J. Gonnet & A. Molnar, *Les vaudois au Moyen Age*, Torino, Claudiana, 1974, p. 295.

the same man? It seemed safer to count them as one and the same person.[13] The method has the drawback of having probably discounted several barbes; the advantage, however, is that it is more reliable and the results can be taken as reflecting the minimum figures.

Only one barbe is known by his patronymic alone—the barbe Tertian, from Meana, referred to five times in the Dauphiné trials from 1487–1488; this means he might be named elsewhere but using only his barbe's name, so that the two could never be conflated. For 47 barbes, we know their Christian name and their patronymic, but not their barbe's name, again supposing that when the two have been quoted one next to the other, they have been interpreted correctly as name and patronymic, for the real name is the name by baptism, and the patronymic only a surname. In this category we find Antoine Porte, Antoine Gallet, Marc Rivoir, Paul Bermond, Mathieu Gauthier. . . It may be, however, that the barbe's name and the patronymic have been used together, which would change things somewhat. I have proceeded, however, by presuming that the first name is the name by baptism unless there was real proof that things were otherwise. Only one case—and again nothing can be ascertained, only presumed—could be found where the barbe was known by his patronymic and his barbe's name: André d'Ananni ou Danna, from d'Alviano in the duchy of Spoleto.[14]

The habit of identifying by Christian name poses another sort of problem. In theory, the barbe has two different Christian names, the one by which he was baptised and the one he was given when he was admitted to the body of preachers. This means that ideally, we would need to identify three names for each preacher: patronymic, Christian name, barbe's name. This is never the case. It is also rare to know both Christian names: there are only two cases where this occurs. During their cross-examination in Oulx in the Alps in 1492, we learn that Francesco of Girondino is the barbe Martin, and that Giovanni of Jacopo received the name Pierre. The barbe Martin is very clear on the matter, as he explains to the inquisitor: "His name

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[13] G. Miolo, *op. cit.*, p. 109: while this may be his patronymic, it could indeed equally be his father's Christian name.

[14] M. Benedetti: "L'interrogatorio dei barba Martino e Pietro (1492)", G. Tourn, *Il barba*, XVII febbraio 2001, Torino, Claudiana, 2001, p. 62.

was Francesco and when he became a barbe, he was attributed the name Martino." Likewise the barbe Pierre explains, "he was called Giovanni and is now called Pietro."[15] His fellow barbe indeed refers to him as barbe Pierre or just Pierre in his declarations. Even here, however, things are not quite so simple. During interrogations, as we have just seen, the barbe Pierre declares he was called Giovanni; the opening statements in the proceedings, however, refer to him as Pietro di Jacopo and not Giovanni, and twice his fellow refers to him as "Pietro di Iaco". This is what complicates matters, for during the course of the proceedings, the two barbes evoke 25 fellow barbes, most often in the following way: "Liberat de Thomas" by which filiation is implied: Liberat, son of Thomas. This would incline us to think the Christian name is of baptism. I presumed, for the purposes of my catalogue, that the 25 barbes referred to were identified by their baptismal name, but there was nothing further to direct my choice. To these categories, we can add one case, known by his Christian name alone, quoted by Miolo: Gilles of Gilles.[16]

Finally, 46 barbes, which means 40%, are known only by their barbe's name. This is perfectly logical, after all. In the community, this was the name by which they introduced themselves to their followers and how henceforth they came to be called. This doubtless confounded the authorities of the times, just as it complicates our task today, which amounts to saying that our preachers frequently remain enigmatic. What information can nevertheless be gained about them?

First, considering their classification in time. For twenty-five barbes, no dates whatsoever could be established. This is the case, notably, for the barbes Miolo evokes.[17] For the eighty-five others, a date can be put forward referring to when they exercised their mission and, in the best of cases, marking the duration of their activities. While for some of them, only one date can be ascertained, others crop up several times. The oldest is the barbe Barthélemy Tertian, practising in 1400, but while Miolo counts him among the barbes, Tertian should not, perhaps, strictly speaking be counted here since no con-

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[15] M. Benedetti, *ibid.*, pp. 55 and 61.

[16] G. Miolo, *Historia breve & vera de gl'affari de i Valdesi delle Valli*, a cura di Enea Balmas, Torino, Claudiana, 1971, p. 112.

[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 107–115: "I nomi de i Barba, o sia Ministri Valdesi".

temporary text actually employs the term "barbe".[18] Next in line comes "le gros Amchel de Freissinières" whom we met above, evoked by Philippe Rey in 1451. It must be presumed that certain preachers were remarkably long-lived and just as remarkably active, to have been named so often by different witnesses. Thus the barbe Benoit is mentioned 14 times, and his time of exercise spans the period 1450–1484 at least, depending on which testimonies are being conflated and how they match up. Etienne is referred to 44 times (1478–1479); Simon (1447–1489) and Antoine Porte (1460–1480) are evoked 51 times. The record goes to Jacques Roux, mentioned 88 times, practising between 1457 and 1487. These figures should be understood in context: if the second half of the fifteenth century seems to be far better accounted for than the first half of the sixteenth, it is because such a mass of documentary material was left by the 1487–1488 trials in the Dauphiné, which we discussed above.

The Diaspora in the West

The barbes' place of origin proves interesting to analyse since, as already mentioned, they were all chosen from within the community, which meant they had always come from the Waldensian population. In other words, their place of origin should rightly confirm what we know about Waldensian settlements at the time. Unfortunately, such information is not always available. Nothing is known about the geographical origins of 29 barbes. For the 87 others, however, we can trace the province they came from and sometimes the exact locality. These are as follows, ranked here in descending order showing how many barbes came from which province or locality: Piedmont (31), Dauphiné (24), Duchy of Spoleto (20), Provence (5), Burgundy (2), Marche d'Ancona (2), Apulia (2), Lyons (1). These results, however incomplete and imprecise, are revealing in more ways than one.

Classification by geographical criteria, in provinces, may appear simple; this is unfortunately not the case. It should be recalled that

[18] There were therefore two barbes called Tertian, from Meana: Miolo, writing in the late sixteenth century identifies this one, noting that he exercised "one hundred and sixty years ago and was known as "the broad-handed;" there was another, whose Christian name and barbe's name we do not know, exercising in 1486 and 1487.

the period in question is the fifteenth—sixteenth centuries, running from the mid-fifteenth century, to be more precise, starting from the trial of Philippe Rey in 1451 when the term "barbe" first appears, until the 1560s when, as we shall go on to see, the Waldensian community put an end to the existence of the barbes by embracing the Reformation. It so happens that during this period, the boundary between Piedmont and the Dauphiné shifted more than once. In fact, it was not so much the limit between provinces that changed, but between states, this occurring several times between the duchy of Savoy and the kingdom of France, with Piedmont belonging to Savoy and the Dauphiné to France. These were the years of the famous wars waged against Italy, and we are using the terms Piedmont and Dauphiné to refer to the territories they defined at the time. To make this shifting geography clearer, we can usefully refer to the presentation Pierre Gilles gives in his work to describe the Waldensian settlements:

> There were six principal valleys, where the people from Lyons came to settle in the Alps. Freissinières, and Vallouise, beyond the Dauphiné Alps, the Cluson valley too in the Dauphiné, but before the Alps in the direction of Piedmont, and three in Piedmont, near the Cluson valley: the valleys of Luserna (including Angrogna), Perouse and Saint-Martin.[19]

As we have just seen, these two provinces, and Piedmont first of all, figured at the top of the list of regions which "produced" barbes. Reading further in the study by Gilles, we can find ten communities in the Luserna valley, the widest settlement: "Bubiane, Luserne, La Tour, Angrogne, le Villar, Bobi, Campillon, Fenil, Garzillane and Rora"; these localities are now known as Bibiana, Luserna, Torre Pellice, Angrogna, Villar Pellice, Bobbio Pellice, Campiglione Fenile, Fenile, Garzigliana and Rorà. Then he evokes, "the valley of Perouse, reckoned to be half the size of the Luserna valley, counting six communties: Pinasche the greater, Perouse, from which the valley takes its name, Villar, Pramol, S. Germain and Les Portes." These communities now go by the names of Pinasca, Perosa, Argentina, Villar Perosa, Pramollo, San Germano and Porte. Finally Gilles refers to, "the valley of Saint-Martin, narrower than the other two, but sheltering

[19] P. Gilles, *Histoire ecclésiastique des Églises vaudoises de l'an 1160 au 1643*, Geneva, 1644; reed. Pignerol, Chiantore & Mascarelli Éditeurs, 1881, 2 v., v. 1, pp. 12–13.

eleven small to medium communities which are: Rioclaret, Faé, Prals, Rodoret, Salse, Macel, Manelle, Chabrans, Traverses, Saint-Martin from which the valley takes its names, and Bouvils". The modern names for these villages are Riclaretto, Faetto, Prali, Rodoretto, Salza, Macello, Maniglia, Chabrano, Traverse and San Martino.

In all, this makes twenty-seven communities that we can take as being, as indeed they were at the time, totally Waldensian. Of the 31 barbes from Piedmont, we know only the province of origin for seven of them; for two others we know they came from the Marquisate of Saluces and from the Susa valley respectively. Another came from Cesana Torinese; this meant all three came from outside the "Waldensian valleys" proper, implying that, as far as Piedmont was concerned, Waldensian settlements extended well beyond the valleys that Pierre Gilles in the seventeenth century identified as being Waldensian. For the others, we know only that four came from San Martino (or where Val Germanasca meets Val Perosa), three from the Luserna valley and two from the Perosa valley. We do have precise indications for twelve others: five from Angrogna, four from Meana, and three from Bobbio Pellice. At the head of the list of provinces from which barbes originated, the relative importance of Piedmont is thus confirmed, which would probably explain too why the Piedmont word for uncle, "barba", came to dominate throughout the western, Romance branch of the Waldensians as the term by which to designate the preachers.

Next in importance as a recruiting ground for future barbes, only four places behind, figured the Dauphiné as defined by the boundaries of the era, from where 24 Barbes came. It must be borne in mind that the Dauphiné then included not just the region as we know it today, the western flanks of the Alps, but also, as we saw above, the Chisone valley, also referred to as Val Pragelato, now in Piedmont, and equally the Valentinois, meaning the region around Valence, now part of the department of the Drôme in France. For three of these barbes, we know only their region of origin: two came from the Valentinois, one from the Dauphiné. As for the others, their exact place of origin can be traced: five from Freissinières, three from Vallouise, three from Pragelato, two from Fenestrelle. Other localities count one barbe: Embrun, L'Argentière, Molines on the present-day French side of the Alps, and Garnier, Laux, Mentoulles and Pattemouche on the Italian side in today's terms. If we now return to Pierre Gilles' description, we read: "the Cluson valley counts

six communities: Pragela, being the largest, then, in descending order, Uxeaus, Fenestrelles, Mentoles, Villaret and Meane, the lowest in the Dauphiné" which today go by the names of Pragelato, Usseaux, Fenestrelle, Mentoulles, Villaretto and Meana. To round off this panorama of the Dauphiné settlements, we should add, as noted above, the Valentinois, where ten villages at least counted Waldensians amongst their inhabitants (Barbières, Beauregard, Chabeuil, Charpey, Châteaudouble, Montelier, Rochefort, Saint-Mamans, Saint-Nazaire en Royans, Saint-Vincent) and more particularly in the Briançon Alps, the three valleys L'Argentière, Vallouise (formerly Val Pute) and Freissinières. This makes nineteen communities in all. In other words, Piedmont and the Dauphiné counted some forty-six communities which were wholly or partially Waldensian. From these two provinces alone came 63% of the barbes in our cross-section whose origins can be determined. This is a clear indication of their importance within the western community. There is no doubting the fact that the Waldensian communities in the Alpine, Dauphiné and Piedmont valleys made up the bastion of the western diaspora.[20]

In order of importance concerning the origin of barbes, the third place, with a total of 20, goes to the duchy of Spoleto, to which can be added La Marche d'Ancona. This result is truly problematic. Historiography has never acknowledged these regions as zones where Waldensians settled. There is only the trial of the two barbes at Oulx in 1492, which provides a mass of information about the large number of barbes originating from these regions in central Italy. Admittedly, the two barbes' testimonies converge and confirm each other mutually, but if strict historical method is being exacted, it must be admitted that the document stands alone. The principle applied in law is not always inappropriate in history: *Testis unus, testis nullus* [one witness is no witness]. Yet there is no denying the fact that here we have two Waldensian barbes, and it is hard to imagine why and how they should have concocted their accounts from imagination alone. For this reason, I have taken their testimonies into account, hoping that future research will be able to bear out their statements.

[20] P. Gilles, *ibid.*, v. 1, pp. 13–15. For le Valentinois: P. Leutrat, *Les vaudois*, Paris, Les éditions sociales, 1966, map p. 94.

Next, with five barbes, comes Provence, to which should be added the Comtat Venaissin, papal territory bordering Provence. While the Waldensians were very much in a minority in the province as a whole, they settled in some forty localities in the Luberon region, in the broad sense of the term. In certain parishes, the Waldensians represented the whole, or the vast majority at least, of the population; this was the case in Lourmarin, Mérindol, Villelaure, Cabrières-d'Avignon, Cabrières-d'Aigues and Murs for example. Sizeable Waldensian communties were also to be found in Cadenet, La Roque-d'Anthéron, Roussillon and Lacoste. There were also Waldensian communties in Gordes, Joucas and Oppède. Lastly, there were Waldensian families living in large, isolated farmsteads known as "bastides" in Provence, as well as clusters of families in towns such as Apt, Pertuis, Cavaillon and Manosque. The situation was thus quite variable, as were figures from one place to another. The origins of the five Provençal barbes have been traced back, in one case to Malaucène, a locality that has never been considered Waldensian. The four others came from places with close Waldensian links: Murs, Cabrières-d'Avignon, Lacoste and La Roque-d'Anthéron.[21]

Two barbes came from Apulia, in southern Italy. As was mentioned above, the inquisitor Antonio of Settimo made reference to a Waldensian superior living in Apulia.[22] It has been established that from this era onwards, and in the following century in particular, a sizeable wave of Waldensian immigrants from Provence and the Alps settled in this region. Pierre Gilles refers to it in the following terms:

> Then, in around the year 1400, as the Waldensians were persecuted on the orders of the pope in Avignon, many of them returned to the valleys their fathers had left behind, and from there, accompanied by many others from these same valleys, set off to settle on the frontiers of Apulia, in the direction of the town of Naples, and with time they founded small townships of their own there, namely Monlione, Montavato, Faito, La Cella and La Motta. And finally, in around the year 1500, some from Freissinières and other Waldensian valleys went to live in the city of Volturara, close to the said townships.[23]

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[21] Concerning the Waldensians from Provence, see G. Audisio, *Les vaudois du Luberon. Une minorité en Provence (1460–1560)*, Mérindol, A.E.V.H.L., 1984.

[22] See above, chapter 1.

[23] P. Gilles, *ibid.*, v. 1, p. 30.

Other than Montavato, which has never been successfully localised, these localities are now called Monteleone di Puglia, Faeto, Celle, Motta Montecorvino and Volturara. The region was undoubtedly of considerable importance in the Waldensian diaspora and played a significant part too in its organisation. Witnesses refer frequently to it. Philippe Rey, cross-examined as we know in 1451, speaks of a barbe who claimed to have come from Manfredonia, in Apulia; it was also where the collection made in the Waldensian valleys was sent since the master lived there. Rey, accompanied by François Aydet from Val Perosa had twice gone to Apulia, in 1449 and 1450 bearing the collected funds.[24] The 1487 Dauphiné trials confirm the importance of Apulia, which comes through particularly in the cross-examination of the Griot family, from Pragelato. Questioned on October 10–11, 1487, Pierre Griot revealed not only the names of nine barbes, but also declared "that they had a superior ['*superiorem*'] in Apulia . . . that they called the Waldensian 'majoral' ['*majoral valdensium*']"; the barbes had told him "that their sect was flourishing in Apulia, where they had their church", a declaration confirmed by Etienne Orcel as follows: "the barbes have their superior ['*majorem*'] in Apulia." Then we find François Griot, questioned on December 4, 1487, declaring that the barbes had taken his sister with them to Apulia, and since then he had not seen her; he went on to say a barbe had told him she was well, had not married and lived there with them.[25] Meanwhile the inquisitor Jean de Roma, in his anti-Waldensian treatise or *Declaratio* of 1533, writes that, "the abovementioned heretics multiplied in number and gained strength in Calabria and Apulia, so much so that the said sect preaches quasi publicly in these climes."[26] This inquisitor had indeed led proceedings against the Waldensians in Provence, and had notably directed the trial of another Pierre Griot, the future barbe, the year before. During his cross-examination, Griot made the following statement:

> He also said that it is true that this sect reigns principally in Calabria and in Apulia and preaches there quasi publicly. It is for this reason

[24] W. Weitzecker, "Processo di un valdese nell'anno 1451", *Rivista Cristiana*, 1881, pp. 364–365.

[25] Departmental archives. Isère, B 4350, Pierre Griot: ff° 104 v° and 154; Étienne Orcel: f° 265; Antoine Griot: f° 188 v°.

[26] National Archives, Paris, J 851, n. 2, f° 228 v°.

> that preachers sent to the said places of Calabria and Apulia bear with them large sums of money for the congregations.[27]

The distant origins of the populations who set down roots in Apulia remained inscribed in the collective memory for many years to come, one reason doubtless being the fact that generations later, they continued to speak a Provençal dialect. Admittedly, this was gradually deformed as it blended with local idioms, but it was always clearly distinguishable from the native vernacular. Court records, for instance, from the Inquisitorial tribunal of Naples drawn up in 1589 make mention of four witnesses laying charges against inhabitants of Volturara referred to as "i Provenzani".[28] This can thus be read as both an affirmation and a confirmation of the sizeable Waldensian presence in Apulia.

Inversely, the silence surrounding Calabria, and the absence of barbes from this area, as far as records show at any rate, can only intrigue and remind us that these results are relative. It is a fact that a large wave of immigration had made for Calabria, as it had for Apulia. Here too, Pierre Gilles serves as our guide as he describes the arrival and settlement of Waldensians from the Alpine valleys:

> All around Montalto, they founded the bourg to be known as *Borgo d'Oltromontani*, in reference to the Apennine mountains which are between the valleys and these places, and they populated the town. Then, some fifty years later, when their numbers had multiplied and had been increased too by others who arrived from the valleys from time to time, they edified another bourg about one mile from the first and called it Saint-Sixte . . . And later . . . they edified and populated Vacarisso, Argentina and Saint-Vincent. Then finally the Marquis of Spinello allowed them to edify Guardia on his lands . . . In all these places, the Waldensians, or *Oltramontani* multiplied in great numbers.[29]

These places are today called Montalto Uffugo (the former *Borgo d'Oltromontani*), San Sisto dei Valdesi, Vaccarizzo, Argentina, San Vincenzo La Costa and Guardia Piemontese. If we draw our conclusions solely from the catalogue of barbes, Calabria would indeed seem less important than Apulia, which is borne out in part at least by testimonies cited here.

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[27] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur. Procès du barbe vaudois Pierre Griot par l'inquisiteur Jean de Roma (Apt, 1532)*, Aix-en-Provence, Edisud, 1979, p. 105.

[28] G. Audisio, "Vraie ou fausse conversion? Les valdo-protestants des Pouilles à la fin du XVI^{e} siècle", *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica*, 2. 1996, pp. 215–227.

[29] P. Gilles, *ibid.*, v. 1, pp. 29–30.

While the silence surrounding Calabria might come as a surprise, the presence of Burgundy and Lyons (as well as central Italy referred to above) is no less surprising, with one barbe each. These could just be exceptional cases, requiring no further commentary. Yet at the same time, these regions constituted the very first Waldensian settlements, even if, from the fourteenth century onwards, no further mention can be found in documents. Furthermore, if we retrace the itinerary the two Martin and Pierre, cross-examined in 1492, claim to have followed barbes in France the year before, we find further cause to be perplexed. They went with their companions to visit Waldensians not only in Provence, the Lyons region and Burgundy, but also out to the Limousin and Bordeaux regions, via Auvergne and Forez. This comes as a direct challenge to our knowledge of Waldensian geography in the late middle ages. The Waldensian diaspora could well turn out to have been far more widespread than previously thought. Research has still to confirm these hypotheses.

Here, then, we have a first, global and quantitative picture of the Waldensians' preachers from the west, their "barbes", or "uncles". These initial fact and figures are significant not just because they confirm certain findings but also because they invite a certain number of questions. Of course, as is always the case in history, and all the more so when clandestine, persecuted minorities are being studied, it is important not to lose sight of the fragmentary, even contingent nature of results, given the sources of information we have to drawn on. This, however, does not prevent their giving us a general overview of those men about whom, once the first figures have been set out, nearly everything has yet to be said.

CHAPTER FIVE

A COMPANY

Blessed be ye poor
Luke 6, 20

It is now time to turn to the institution of preachers such as it was established and shaped by the Waldensians, to understand better the real lives of these men devoted to the service of their community. We will then go on to explore the barbes' mission, which amounted to the one and only reason for their existence, representing the very heart of the community, which depended on them for their well-being and survival. In this chapter, however, we will focus on the organisation of the company, in other words the internal structure of the community of faithful dissenters.

Mere country folk . . .

The first question to ask is how they were recruited. In other words, how was a man chosen or destined to become a barbe? As we saw in chapter four, Morel in 1530 presented the company to the Reformers in the following terms: "Now, the recipiendaries are almost without exception from the class of shepherds or agricultural labourers. They are aged between twenty-five and, more frequently, thirty, and are completely illiterate." In other words, the preachers were recruited from within the Waldensian community itself. We know, however, that for a host of reasons already examined, the foremost of which was persecution, the Waldensian population had become almost entirely rural, from the peasantry. This is not to discount or overlook the Waldensian community of Fribourg of course, but this is an exceptional case: first because in the fifteenth century it formed what was no doubt a last testimony to the Waldensians' urban origins; and second, because for reasons explained above, it is to be counted in the eastern wing of the diaspora which is not our prime concern here. The Waldensians from the west, and from the east

too in fact, were countryfolk, peasants. As the Morel report makes clear, their leaders were aware of this and evoked the issue directly when they described their community. Yet how is this information to be corroborated?

The hundreds of Waldensians from the Dauphiné questioned in 1487 and 1488, whether from Freissinières, Vallouise or Pragelato, were all agricultural labourers or shepherds, going by the descriptions they give of their activities in their statements, for few are more explicit. If there are a few craftsmen amongst them, tailors for instance, it is on a modest scale, and there is nothing to say they did not also work the land, combining two professional activities as was frequent at the time.

The rural character comes through in the documents left by Jean de Roma, the Dominican inquisitor exercising in Provence in the 1530s. He evokes the "bastides" [farmsteads] and villages, in terms that leave little doubt as to his contempt for these rustics from the Alps who had come to settle in abandoned lands. His anti-Waldensian treatise includes the following description:

> The Waldensians came down to the Provençal lands in France, many of which were lying fallow or were unproductive for their temporal lords. It was indeed an uninhabited region in many parts, and it was difficult to find men willing to work the lands and cultivate them by the sixteenth or eighteenth part. But the above-mentioned Waldensians agreed to work them to the seventh or eighth.[1]

Such a statement is crystal-clear: the Waldensians were peasants. On this point, as on many others, the commissaries appointed by the Parlement of Provence, charged by the king to report on the inquisitor's activities in 1533, pick up on the fact in the report sent back to court, drawn up and sent in the same year:

> There is no doubting that the said sect . . . has extended and spread in the land of Provence in several areas over the last thirty or forty years, as a result of the fact that in times past they were expelled from the said lands of Savoy, Dauphiné and Piedmont, they withdrew to the said land of Provence and lived there, taking on lands, bastides and other estates to commend themselves to the lords of the land, whose revenues were increased as a result.[2]

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[1] National Archives, Paris, J 851, n. 2, f° 6: they are speaking here of the lord's proportional due on harvests.

[2] G. Audisio, "Rapport des commissaires du roi sur les vaudois (Aix-en-Provence,

We can in fact find more eloquent testimony even than this, thanks to notarial records which are particularly well-preserved in the south of France. Focusing on marriage contracts and wills, both commonly recorded by Provençal notaries in this era, even where village populations were concerned, I assembled for the purpose of doctoral research 445 marriage contracts (which amounts to saying the same number of men) and 195 wills left by the inhabitants of the six Waldensian villages I focused on, during the years 1460–1560. With the exception of Cabrières-d'Avignon, for which few documents were in fact available, the villages in question were all situated on the southern face of the Luberon. Since then, having equally perused notarial registers from Apt, on the northern side, I have been able to complete my study by adding acts drawn up by inhabitants of the various localities I have identified as Waldensian, giving a total of 890 men, still in the same period. Thus, the overall figure, only counting men, but counting those wills left by women in which mention in made of the husband's trade, comes to 1,530 inhabitants of the Luberon between 1460 and 1560, presumed to be Waldensian. In only 20% of cases is the profession stated directly. This is intriguing, not only because it goes without saying that they all necessarily had some kind of professional activity, but also because, when the profession is given, it is more often than not clearly stated that the man in question is a craftsman. We can presume from this that, most likely, the notary only recorded the profession when it was unusual, which is equally the case in non-Waldensian villages such as Cucuron or even the town of Apt. Why indeed state the profession when it was the common lot to work the land? If this hypothesis is retained, then 93% of the Waldensians I traced, going by Provençal notarial sources, were agricultural labourers or shepherds.[3] The fact is borne out equally for the Piedmont Waldensians, thus confirming that rurality was a characteristic feature of the Waldensian community, and continued to be so.

It becomes clear that facts and figures converge, even over an extended period of time. From the fourteenth century at least, the

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1533)", *I Valdesi e l'Europa*, Torre Pellice, Collana della Società di Studi Valdesi, 1982, pp. 137–150, p. 148.

[3] G. Audisio, "Une minorité homogène: les vaudois, pasteurs et agriculteurs XIV^e^–XVIII^e^ siècle", Simonetta Cavaciocchi (a cura di), *Il ruolo economico delle minoranze in Europa sec. XIII–XVIII*, Prato, Le Monnier, 2001, pp. 187–194.

Waldensian community had become, and was to remain, rural, made up of agricultural labourers and shepherds. And it was from this background too that the barbes came. Hopeful candidates still had to fulfil certain conditions. Let us again recall what the Morel report had to say on the matter:

> All those who are to be received amongst us, but who are still with their families for the time, must first kneel to ask admittance, quite simply as a show of humility; they ask, I tell you, those of us whom they meet and who have already been received, to admit them to the ministry, if they will, and to intercede with God on their behalf, so that they might be deemed worthy of so great a ministry. Then, when we meet together, we transmit their request to the brothers who are present, and if we can speak favourably of them, and if all the brothers are in agreement, they are admitted for instruction. Now, the recipiendaries are almost without exception from the class of shepherds or agricultural labourers. They are aged between twenty-five and, more frequently, thirty, and are completely illiterate.

There is no need for further comment or extrapolation. Morel puts the case clearly, and no document has been found to confirm or dispute his testimony, which we thus take as it stands. Once candidates had been presented and admitted, however, there remained the question of how to train them.

. . . *trained* . . .

In any given society the training of its leaders constitutes a formidable challenge, for two paradoxical, and perhaps even contradictory requirements must be met. The future leaders must be given real, tangible fields of competency that set them above the people they will be responsible for; at the same time, they must not become so different from the populations they will have to instruct that they are cut off from them. In other words, how is competency to be acquired that will distinguish but not separate the leaders from the public they deal with? Like all other religious communities, the Church of Rome had already encountered the same dilemma, and continues to do so to this day. Restricting our interests to the period in question, the learned, university-trained clergy was often hard-pushed to get its message over to the faithful flocks whom they were invited to instruct, particularly for the Lent and Advent sermons; meanwhile, the parish clergy, living within the community, was often

untrained, other than what had been picked up along the way. The paradoxical consequence of this, and for opposite reasons, was that the congregations often came to reject, although not always violently, the former whom they did not understand, as well as the latter whom they understood only too well, so much were they alike.

The challenge is thus real, and was no different for the Waldensians. How were preachers to be trained without separating them from their flocks? We can surmise that persecution, a real threat hanging over all of them, gave them a common understanding which brought them together and kept the barbes firmly anchored in their community.

One case can be set apart straightaway: that of Francesco of Girundino, the barbe Martin, taken prisoner and questioned in 1492 as we saw above. During his cross-examination, he asserted that he had set out on his mission "with his father who was a barbe."[4] This case stands alone, and we have no further explanation; as will be seen later, it was virtually impossible to be a barbe from father to son. Beyond this, what training, in theory and in practice, did the barbes receive?

There are few testimonies on the question. If we go by what the two barbes, Martin and Pierre, admitted during their cross-examination in 1492, it was their everyday experience alone that trained the young barbes. The barbe Martin declared "his father had taught him the faith and the Waldensian heresy, and had begun taking him with him in the lands and regions of Italy . . . and his father, who was a barbe, went to hear the confessions of the people in this mountainous areas and preach to them." Later, he admitted "that he had gone to learn the doctrine of the Waldensians with another barbe named Barnoro . . . who took him for two or three years to the above-named places". Finally, in answer to the inquisitor seeking to know with whom he had gone further into the doctrine after Barnoro, he said, "with another barbe called Joshua". It was after this that he was taken to their "grand master", marking the end of his apprenticeship. His companion, the barbe Pierre, also taken prisoner and questioned in Oulx in 1492, was asked "how they become barbes". He answered, "Before exercising the art, they travel in the world with other learned barbes and then they present them to their grand

[4] M. Benedetti: "L'interrogatorio dei barba Martino e Pietro (1492)", G. Tourn, *Il barba*, XVII febbraio 2001, Torino, Claudiana, 2001, p. 54.

master who, having consulted with other barbes, when he has judged them capable, gives them the power to hear confession, preach and give absolution." The two testimonies thus concord; while they do not exclude a more formal, theoretical education, they only evoke practical training assured by an older barbe who guided the trainee barbe during the missionary rounds which they accomplished together.[5]

Another forty years go by before more information can be gleaned, of a more precise nature this time. First, we have the interrogatory of the young Pierre Griot, whose testimony is important indeed as he was still in training to become a barbe.[6] He has already featured here, being questioned in October and November 1532 by the inquisitor Jean de Roma in Apt, in Provence. His declaration, not answering a precise question, and thus apparently given spontaneously, goes as follows:

> Before they receive a preacher into their sect, he must be well approved. And he is made to study the New Testament for four or five years, until he knows it all by heart, such as the gospel of Saint Matthew and Saint John, and the apostles Timothy and Titus, and the epistles of Saint Peter, Saint John, Saint James and Saint Jude. Thus he who is speaking says he already knew Saint Matthew and the canonical epistles in his Briançon mother tongue and two chapters from Saint Luke.

A little further down, he adds:

> Says furthermore that he spent two years studying Saint Matthew and the canonical epistles under the doctrine and council of Jean Serre of Murs and the hosier of Avignon.[7]

At the very beginning of proceedings, in fact, the inquisitor asked him, "How long he had spent at school;" Pierre Griot answered, "About two or three years."[8] In this case, it would appear to be a more theoretical type of training, even if it was apparently restricted to rote learning of a certain number of books from the New Testament. Here too, it would appear to be the case that the schooling was

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[5] M. Benedetti, *ibid.*, p. 54 and p. 61.

[6] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur. Procès du barbe vaudois Pierre Griot par l'inquisiteur Jean de Roma (Apt, 1532)*, Aix-en-Provence, Edisud, 1979, p. 106: "Questioned as to whether he was a master or a subject,—answered that he had not yet been received as a preacher."

[7] G. Audisio, *ibid.*, pp. 105–106, and p. 107.

[8] G. Audisio, *ibid.*, p. 71.

assured by the barbes, in this case Jean Serre and the hosier, both of whom we will be returning to later. Furthermore, thus confirming the 1492 declarations, Pierre Griot admitted he had accompanied the barbes on their mission so as to learn from them. He states this expressly in reference to "one of the principal barbes of the Waldensian sect, who was called Louis and was a man of sixty years or more:"[9]

> Says and confesses that the said Louis took him with him to Cabrières and persuaded him to preach like him and largely incited him to do so. And when the said accused who is speaking said to him, "What do you want me to do? I am not learned, I hardly know how to read", the said Louis answered him: "You will learn little by little". And so the said man who is speaking began to practise and to read the New Testament to those who would hear him.[10]

To this must be added the most reliable testimony, as we saw above, that given by the barbe Morel in his 1530 report. The extract has already been quoted:

> If their behaviour is irreproachable, we put them to the test for three or four years, but only during the two to three winter months, during which we teach them to spell and to read, and we have them learn by heart all the chapters of Matthew and John, the so-called canonical epistles and a good part of Paul.[11]

This time, unlike what the two barbes questioned in 1492 declared, it is a question of formal teaching during the winter. Confronting these documents enables us to draw several conclusions and to ponder certain questions further. We can observe, in any case, a certain converging of testimonies, even if differences, secondary ones that are nuances rather than contradictions, emerge too.

We are thus fully assured of the fact that candidates for the function of barbe, recruited within the Waldensian community at the age of twenty-five to thirty, all came from rural backgrounds and were illiterate. For three or four years, they received training, both theoretical and practical. For the two or three winter months, they took lessons with an experienced barbe. Although we have no formal proof of the fact, the teacher doubtless undertook to instruct

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[9] G. Audisio, *ibid.*, p. 101.
[10] G. Audisio, *ibid.*, p. 101.
[11] V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede dei valdesi riformati*, Torino, Claudiana, 1975, pp. 36–37.

them in the founding characteristics of their community—its origin and its history, its organisation, its fundamental principles, its beliefs, its reluctance concerning certain articles of faith or practices in the Church of Rome, and ways of preaching, hearing confession, gathering together and escaping notice. His primary function, however, besides reading, was to get the future barbes to learn by heart certain books from the New Testament.

The sacred books chosen as the basis for this training deserve comment. It is indeed a decisive aspect for it defined the barbes' training and so had a direct influence on the knowledge they in turn passed on to their followers. The books reflect their spiritual bearing and their religious sensibility. The first thing to note is that their training is based on the Bible alone. No other work is considered essential reading. Furthermore, the books from the Bible selected as the inspired texts constitute a fundamental and determining element in the definition of what are known as "the canonical Scriptures". The Reformation, for instance, did not maintain all the books deemed by the Catholic tradition to make up the Revelation. What is more, even amongst the selected texts, those books considered of foremost importance in the training of the leaders-to-be tell us much about their faith. Only the New Testament is mentioned; everything is focused on the Gospel and a few other books.

What should we make of this? We shall start by conflating the Morel report with the declarations made by Pierre Griot, the future barbe, who evokes the question in two different ways: from a general angle, naming the books that future barbes should learn, then, concerning his own case, the books he already knew by heart. The advantage of comparing testimonies in this case is that the two documents are contemporaneous, dating from 1530 and 1532 respectively. We can observe first of all that two of the Gospels are present in both cases, Matthew and John, in other words the most concrete and then the most spiritual. As for the two chapters of Luke that Pierre Griot also knows by heart, this could be an exceptional case, reflecting either his own choice or that of his master, Jean Serre. Next, we find in both testimonies the canonical epistles, also known as the catholic epistles, by which their universality is underlined for most of them are not addressed to particular individuals or communities: those from James, Peter, John and Jude. While Morel refers to them in general when he evokes the "canonical epistles", Griot names the four apostles who wrote the letters.

Last, we turn to the epistles of Paul. The canon traditionally retains twelve epistles from the apostle to the Gentiles; there is also a thirteenth letter, to the Hebrews, which was long attributed to Paul, although much later; it was still the case in the era we are considering here. Morel's references, as we saw, are somewhat vague, for he alludes to "part of Paul". Griot, on the other hand, is more precise, and his precision is extremely telling. When his references are limited to the epistles to Timothy and Titus (two addressed to the former, one to the latter), it indicates that a selection has been made from the apostle's writings, reflecting a particular slant in the training received by the barbes. Indeed, these letters make up what are known as the "pastoral letters" of Paul.[12] The selection is a very clear sign of a pastoral rather than a dogmatic approach: there is nothing minor or fortuitous about discounting the major, doctrinal epistles such as the letters to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. We know how important the Reformers in the sixteenth century deemed these epistles to be, starting with Luther himself, for whom Romans I, 17—"the Just shall live by the faith"—was the keystone of his personal liberation and his inspiration. We shall be seeing later that the question of justification by faith was an object of discord between the barbes and the Reformers. It is this that inclines me to wonder whether the formula chosen by Morel in his discussions with Oecolampadius and Bucer were not deliberately vague, so as perhaps to avoid contestation.

One further point requires comment concerning the way the training the barbes received was adapted not only to the future barbes themselves, but through them, to the people they would later be addressing. The issue is a linguistic one. We have already seen how, in the Church of Rome, the Word of God was spoken in Latin alone; from the very beginning, Vaudès wanted to break with this tradition so that people might hear the Word in their own tongue. We saw above, in passing, that Pierre Griot asserted that he knew certain books from the New Testament by heart, adding that he knew them "in his Briançon mother tongue", a variety of Provençal. The point is important, for it reflects the linguistic unity of the

[12] The letter to Philemon should, strictly speaking, be counted in the pastoral letters, but the presence or absence of this very short epistle is of no great significance in any given corpus.

Waldensian diaspora in the west. From the Valentinois to Calabria and Apulia, via the Dauphiné Alps and Piedmont, the Waldensians constituted throughout a *langue d'oc* speaking population. As a result, the barbes' books, such as have come down to us and can still be consulted to this day, are in Romance, even the Bibles which are more or less complete. It is a point we shall be returning to. Furthermore, the manuscript of the Morel report was drawn up in Latin but translated into *langue d'oc* so that the other barbes could understand it. This amounts to saying that the barbes learnt in the vernacular the New Testament books which their followers could thus understand directly.

If we distance ourselves a little from the training, what can be said about it? It might be found rather elementary and traditional. Indeed, learning texts by rote and, as far as we can tell, learning little else, might seem a very limited objective for the future leaders of a religious society. The barbes did not study at universities, for example. Other testimonies even allow us to establish that they avoided such formal learning. This should not be taken as merely a form of reticence towards science as such, even though it cannot be dismissed either. My own belief is that two facts have to be taken into account. First, learning constitutes a form of wealth, something the barbes, the leaders of the Poor of Lyons, did not by vocation seek to acquire. We should not overlook, on this issue, the grand debate that animated and divided the Franciscan movement in its early days. We know how it was resolved—the disciples of "Il Poverello" from Assisi went on to become sages, inquisitors, professors, while their monasteries became richly furnished establishments housing mendicant monks. The second point to bear in mind is that those wishing to enter the universities had to be clerics if they wished to pursue religious studies, canon law or theology. Here are two good reasons which go a long way to explaining why the Waldensians rejected university studies.

If we consider the barbes' training within the perspective of their epoch, however, certain aspects appear far more commendable. First, there is the grounding in the Scriptures, which featured in the Waldensian tradition from Vaudès' first inspiration, but which was in stark contrast to university training based on commentaries and manuals. From this point of view, we can understand why the Waldensians felt at ease with the initial reformist trend, another point we shall be returning to. Second, these young men learnt to read.

Interestingly, Morel does not add, as we would do today, "and write."[13] He concentrates on the importance of reading. This cannot be because he wished deliberately to play down the value of the barbes' training. Could it be an oversight? Personally, I do not think so. Here too it is important to bear in mind the pedagogical practices of the time. While today's primary education focuses on teaching reading and writing at the same time, the "beginner's classes" in former times took great pains to distinguish three levels in the acquisition of learning skills: reading; writing; arithmetic and Latin. These were hierarchic in structure and clearly distinct one from the other; no pupil could be admitted to the level above without thoroughly mastering all that was required in the level below. Many pupils, and these were already but a tiny percentage of the boys of any given age-group, particularly in the country and in the lower social ranks, never went up to the second level, writing, which, bearing in mind the very concrete conditions of the era, represented both an art and a form of physical training. Thus, a fair number of men, who already constituted an elite of sorts having had some schooling in their early years, could read, or had once learnt to read, but remained perfectly incapable of writing. For this reason, it is neither impossible nor absurd to think that the future barbes remained at the first level of learning throughout their training: they might well have been perfectly capable of reading when their training came to an end, whilst being incapable of handling a quill.

The final point to be made on the question is that however limited it might have been, the training represented a heavy weight to be borne by the whole community, and for this reason too it is quite remarkable. We have only to consider the members of the rural clergy in the Catholic world, very much the equivalent of the barbes in that the mission of both was to teach and guide the rural populations. A good number of studies bearing on the late middle ages

[13] The Latin text says: "literas coniungere et legere"; in his Italian translation V. Vinay renders this "scrivere e leggere", which is both inexact and very revealing; as if reading were inseparable from writing: V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede dei valdesi riformati*, Torino, Claudiana, 1975, pp. 36–37. Closer to the text E. Arnaud, who was quoted at length in the preceeding chapter, translates this as "spelling out the letters and reading": E. Arnaud, *Mémoires historiques sur . . . les vaudois du Dauphiné*, Crest, 1896, p. 4. The strict sense of the Latin "conjungo" is "to link", i.e. linking letters one to the other in this context.

or the sixteenth century have brought to light the wretched conditions in which the country priests existed, where, more often than not, they had received no training whatsoever. Being able to read, and drawing their knowledge from the sacred texts, the barbes would have had no reason to feel daunted by their Catholic counterparts.

They were nonetheless passed off as ignorant men, at least if Jean de Roma is to be believed. In his *Declaratio*, which we referred to above, he presents them as follows:

> The said preachers are very ignorant and are completely unlettered with the exception of one of their humanists, and they are barbarians to the point that they bear out the words of the gospel, 'if the blind should lead the blind man, both shall fall into the ditch.'[14]

The highly negative assessment, however, must be interpreted correctly. At the time, Latin was conventionally held to be imperative by the lettered classes; those who had no mastery of the language of learning and spoke only another tongue, tellingly referred to as "vulgar", were deemed illiterate. This was quite obviously the case of our barbes. What is more, if, as I have suggested, most of them could not write either, this would have irredeemably confirmed their state of ignorance, particularly in the eyes of a Dominican like Jean de Roma, inquisitor and, as we learn elsewhere, professor of Holy Scriptures. We can understand that a university-trained man of the Church should have had nothing but scorn for these barbes, who were self-proclaimed preachers undertaking to train and guide their followers without having received anything like adequate training in his sense of the term, and who, as a result had no competency to do so, not to mention that they had never received the necessary authorisation.

Can we presume, from what we learn about their system of training, that schools existed?[15] It would seem to be the case if we read

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[14] National archives, Paris, J 851, n. 2, f° 14; reference to Mat. 15, 14.

[15] There is no point going back over the legendary "school for barbes" alleged to have existed in Piedmont, in Pra del Torno; the question was settled once and for all by E. Comba, *Histoire des vaudois*, Paris, Fischbacher, 1901, pp. 594–600, pp. 597–598: "C'est ainsi que naquit la légende qui a fait du Pré du Tour l'unique siège de l'école des barbes et le centre de la mission vaudoise, au près et plus loin." [This is how the legend grew up that posited Pra del Torno as the one and only site of a school for barbes, as well as the centre of the Waldensian mission, both locally and more extensively.]

between the lines in the Morel report, for how could schooling take place during the two or three winter months without a basic school structure, in keeping with what was practised elsewhere? On the other hand, we cannot discard the possibility that each candidate was attached to one older barbe, so that each master had just one pupil. It has been established, for instance, that at the time, lessons were dispensed not collectively, as in our times, but individually, with a "regent" going from one pupil to the next and adapting the lessons accordingly; this was the case even in urban schools where one hundred pupils or more might be enrolled. There would be nothing so unusual, in other words, about the Waldensians' adopting the same system. Can we be any more certain?[16]

The testimony given by Pierre Griot, already quoted above, refers three times to the training he was undergoing. The first mention is to the books that the barbes had to learn and that he had already learnt by heart. The second time is just to add that he had studied "under the doctrine and council of Jean Serre of Murs and the hosier of Avignon". The third mention, however, is more concrete: "Says and confesses that, a year ago last spring, he was in Murs with Jean Serre, alias de Bérard, to learn, for the custom of the barbes is to keep the young children as pupils all winter."[17]

This time, the word "pupil" is pronounced, a clear indication that an institution of learning existed, even if clandestine. But is it a school training future barbes? It might appear doubtful, since Pierre Griot refers to the pupils as "young children", which would appear quite out of place to refer to the young men Morel describes, recruited between the ages of twenty-five and thirty, all the more since in those days, children entered the adults' world at a very young age, sometimes as early as ten to twelve. Nevertheless, Griot is talking about the future barbes, for he goes on to say, immediately after the quotation given above, "And then afterwards, in spring or summer, they go out to preach through the country, from bastide to bastide." It would indeed appear, then, that there was some form of school for barbes, with a master. Does this amount to saying he had a body of pupils under his sole supervision?

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[16] Whatever the case, Morel speaks neither of schools nor pupils, contrary to what has sometimes been maintained; G. Tourn, *Il barba. Una figura valdese del Quattrocento*, Torino, Claudiana, XVII Febbraio 2001, 2001, p. 32: "le *scholae* di cui parla Morel" (italics his).

[17] G. Audisio, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

On this point, another testimony can be added to the case. It dates from 1532, the same year as that of Griot, and makes up a series of *revelationes*, by which is meant spontaneous declarations which thirty-four inhabitants from the Luberon, above all from the town of Apt, came to make to the inquisitor Jean de Roma against the heretics, foremost amongst whom was Catherine Castagne, one of the inhabitants of the town. In these depositions, we find the following, made by Antoine Pellison, from Apt, aged 16 or 17:

> During Lent . . . And he went into another house. And there he found a master whom they called Barthélemy Dauphin, father of the furbisher, who taught the children and the fathers of the said children, who were from the lands of Saignon . . .[18]

This revelation awakens a doubt. The time in question is indeed school time, before spring when the weather is still unfavourable for it is in Lent;[19] does this mean he is talking about the school for barbes, which other people have apparently come to join too, or is it a village school, or even a sermon given by a barbe called "master"? No further hints are given that would allow us to decide one way or the other.[20]

What has been established is that the theoretical teaching was assured by an experienced, educated barbe, but without knowing for sure whether it was individual or collective. What we do know, however, is that theory alternated with practical experience according to the seasons, a point made both in the Morel report and in Pierre Griot's statement. This second phase, equally part of the barbes' mission, will be discussed later.

The barbes' training came to an end after three or four years. Next came a period about which we know little beyond what Morel explains. Let us return to the passage in question:

> Following this, the above-mentioned recipiendaries are taken to a particular place, where several of our women whom we call "sisters" live

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[18] Musée Arbaud, Aix-en-Provence, MQ 755, f° 19, May 23, 1532; deposition in French. The term given for "furbisher" is the Provençal term "Espasier", a word meaning armourer, or sword-maker.

[19] In 1532, Lent lasted from February 14 (Ash Wednesday) to March 31 (Easter).

[20] Lacking confirmation from other sources, I have by way of prudence omitted Barthélemy Dauphin from the body of barbes analysed in the preceding chapter. On the question of literacy among the Waldensians, see G. Audisio, "Were the Waldensians more literate then their contemporaries (1460–1560)?", P. Biller & A. Hudson ed., *Heresy and Literacy, 1000–1530*, Cambridge, CUP, 1994, pp. 176–185.

> in celibacy. Here they live for one year, sometimes two, and they work, mostly on earthly labours I must admit in all sincerity.

The testimony, a very reliable one overall as we have seen, is all the more trustworthy here in that, speaking as he was to the Reformers who had rejected religious orders and holy celibacy, Morel might have been tempted to pass over the future barbes' obligatory stay with the "sisters" so as to avoid a potentially contentious issue. Little is known about these Waldensian "nuns" of sorts in the period we are dealing with in the western side of the diaspora. It was no doubt to one of these that the Griot brothers François and Antoine from Pragelato were referring in their 1487 statement when they describe how one of their sisters had left with the barbes to go to Apulia. They had had no news from her for three years, but a barbe had told them "that she was well, was not married, and she lived with them."[21] There would indeed seem to have been a real tradition of this type, and such an institution within the community, dating back centuries perhaps.[22]

All things considered, their training was really quite remarkable: learning to read, theoretical teaching, a practical apprenticeship, grounding in the gospels, adapting linguistically to the followers, and a final period given over to reflection and meditation. By the end of their training, mastering these new skills, the young candidates were brought to the barbes' annual assembly where, during a special ceremony, they were at last admitted to the body of preachers. They thus became part of the congregation of barbes, which is to say an organisation in the true sense of the word.

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[21] Departmental archives, Isère, B 4351; François Griot, f° 187: "Quod ipsi barbe conduxerunt suam sororem apud Pulham cum eisdem et eam perdiderunt quia numquam ipsam a post viderunt"; Antoine Griot, f° 188 v°: "Quod perdiderunt unam eorum sororem et propterea barbe valdenses dixerunt quod ipsam conduxerunt apud Pulhiam et a post audiverunt quod erat in Pulhia et sunt tribus annis quibus nihil audiunt, tamen dixit quod unus barba eidem dixit quod soror sua erat sana et dixit eidem quod non erat uxorata et stabit cum eis barbis."

[22] Peter Biller, "The preaching of the Waldensian Sisters", *Heresis*, n. 30, 1999, reprinted in P. Biller, *The Waldenses, 1170–1530*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2001, pp. 125–158.

. . . and organised

We saw earlier how, after the death of Vaudès, the Waldensians were faced with the problem of organising their community. An institution, in itself a sign of stability, was the only way to ensure survival beyond the first generation of the Poor of Lyons. We saw too how the total equality which reigned in the earliest days, even between men and women, gave way to a three-tiered hierarchy (bishops, priests and deacons), now exclusively masculine, replicating the first Christian communities and also the Church of Rome. We know that, amongst the eastern Brethren, from the late fourteenth century onwards, a single distinction was adopted, differentiating between the "Brothers" or "Masters" on the one hand and the followers on the other. The same was true on the western side of the diaspora, where the tripartite hierarchy was abandoned in favour of a single body of preachers.

It would seem, however, that a certain hierarchy was still maintained amongst the barbes themselves, although it is difficult both to define the situation clearly, since testimonies can be contradictory on the issue, and to date changes as source material is quite rare on this count. Once again, the sources we have on the question come either from the trials of Philippe Rey from the Saint Martin valley in 1451, the Waldensians from Pragelato in 1487 and the two barbes in 1492, or from the Morel report, the trial of Pierre Griot and the accounts written by Jean de Roma, all from the years 1530–1533. We shall examine these testimonies in chronological order.

In the mid fifteenth century, Philippe Rey, to whom we have already referred, was interrogated by the inquisitor in Piedmont. Rey spoke of a Waldensian master in Apulia, in Manfredonia more specifically. We cannot be sure from this whether he was evoking a grand master, supposing they indeed had one, or just a barbe among others.[23] On the other hand, in the 1487 cross-examinations of the Pragelato Waldensians, several suspects refer clearly to a barbe held to be superior to the others. Pierre Griot, questioned on October 11, declared, "The barbes have a superior in Apulia who gives orders and from whom they receive the power to hear confession and give

[23] W. Weitzecker, "Processo di un valdese nell'anno 1451", *Rivista Cristiana*, 1881, pp. 363–367, pp. 364–365.

absolution, who is called, and spoken of as the majoral of the Waldensians."[24] This is confirmed on January 9, 1488 by Etienne Orsel, who equally maintained that "the barbes have a superior in Apulia."[25]

The two barbes Martin and Pierre, questioned in Oulx in 1492, confirm that the community had an overall superior. Martin, questioned first, spoke of their "grand master barbe"; he added that "another barbe called André had taken him to their grand master who was called Giovanni of Antonio and who lived in Cambro in the domain of the pope." Finally he twice declared that they called their grand master, "the master of masters," "comite". This last term, ordinarily used in the sea-faring world to designate the head of the oarsmen on a galley, is probably used here to mean "companion", an acception found elsewhere in the sixteenth century, deriving from the Latin "comes", the original meaning of which is "companion" or "pedagogue", the governor of a child. Meanwhile, the barbe Pierre, questioned two days later, was asked, "who had made him a barbe" to which he relied, "Giovanni Antonio, the grand master". The judge then asked him how this grand master was chosen. Pierre replied, "he is elected by the barbes, and he is chosen on a mount of Aquilea, in the Castro of Citariello and then they celebrate the wedding [*sic*]: each barbe makes a donation of some sort and the grand master promises on their faith to preserve and enlarge the above-stated sect."[26] The convergence of these different depositions seems thus to confirm the existence of a general superior of the barbes, and by extension of the Waldensian community as a whole.

Another forty years or so go by before we can again find mention being made of an organisation within the Waldensian community, in three different sources all dating from the years 1530–1533. What makes these documents all the more interesting, and reliable, is not only that their information converges but also that the Morel report offers us a testimony coming directly from the Waldensian barbes themselves speaking freely. The first testimony on this issue is that by Pierre Griot questioned in 1532 by the inquisitor Jean de

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[24] Departmental archives, Isère, B 4350, f° 154: "Quod habent in Pulhia ipsi barbe unum superiorem qui eis ordinat et a quo accipiunt potestatem confitendi et absolvendi qui dicitur esse et nuncupatur majoral valdensium."

[25] *Ibid.*, f° 265: "Quod barbe habent majorem suum in Pulhia."

[26] M. Benedetti, « L'interrogatorio . . . », *op. cit.*, p. 54, 55, and 60.

Roma, who declared, "During their synodal congregation, there are four governors of their synod, by whose council all the others are governed. And the four present governors are called Louis, the oldest, the other is called Etienne, the other Daniel and the fourth Luc". The inquisitor lost no time transmitting this information to the *Parlement* of Provence in his *Declaratio*: "There are four older barbes who preside in their general congregation."[27] Three years later, the duke of Savoy sent a certain Pantaléon Bersour to Provence to make enquiries concerning those suspected of heresy and standing charges in Provence who came from his Alpine lands. He refers to the barbes who had taught the suspects and adds, going by Pierre Gilles' account who would appear to have had access to the documents, "that the conductors in their synods were Louis, the oldest, Etienne, Daniel and Luc."[28] The convergence in these three sources is striking. We can then turn to the Waldensian source to see if the information is confirmed.

In the description of their community presented to the Reformers by the barbes Morel and Masson in 1530, there is no explicit mention made of a hierarchy among the barbes; on the other hand, when evoking the sums of money brought by the barbes to the annual synod, he does say they are "taken in by our leaders," thus suggesting a collegial organisation.[29] On the other hand, if we consult the eleven questions put to the representatives of the Reformation concerning difficulties facing the Waldensians ("the questions we put to you are for us doubtful and obscure"), the first is directly related to the question of organisation, and asks:

> Whether grades and dignities should be established between ministers of the Word of God, such as episcopacy, sacerdocy and deaconate for example. In fact, it seems the apostle gave orders about these to Timothy (1 Tim. 3, & s.) and Titus (Tit. 1, 7) and that Christ ordered Peter chief of the apostles (Mt. 16, 18) and that, amongst the apostles themselves, certain were called pillars (Gal. 2, 9). Amongst ourselves, however, we do not use these grades.[30]

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[27] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur, op. cit.*, p. 104; Nat. Arch. Paris, J 851, n. 2, f° 15: "Sunt enim quatuor antiquiores barbe presidentes in generali eorum conventiculo."

[28] P. Gilles, *Histoire ecclésiastique des Églises vaudoises* . . ., Genève, 1644; reed. Pignerol, 1881, 2 v., v. 1, p. 61.

[29] V. Vinay, *La confessioni di fede* . . ., p. 40: "colliguntur a maioribus nostris."

[30] V. Vinay, *ibid.*, p. 44: "Quae subduntur, nobis multum sunt ambigua atque

In other words, in the Waldensians' own text, the only leadership alluded to is collegial, not individual. What should we make of these testimonies? How can we interpret them? They suggest that during the course of their existence, there were several phases in the Waldensians' organisation.

Having started out with no hierarchy whatsoever, with men and women preachers on an equal footing, there next seems to have been a three-tiered hierarchy which later gave way to a single leader who was a superior general. Later, between the late fifteenth century and the 1530s they apparently passed from individual leadership to a college of four governors, elected by the college of barbes. The Morel report is not forthcoming on the issue, which can be explained by the fact that the four principals doubtless received no particular ordination, but were rather given a "charge" or a particular "mission". If this is the case, there is no real contradiction between Morel and the other testimonies from the 1530s. If the Waldensian envoy did not put the matter to the Reformers, it was because there was no "hierarchical order" in the proper sense of the term, but rather a distribution of roles within the community. Conversely, the Morel report does specifically state that there is no ecclesiastical order, although this was not the case in the Waldensian community in the fourteenth century. Furthermore, the question concerning the three orders that they had adopted in the past is revealing indeed, and to my mind reflects the doubts stirring within the community in the sixteenth century—these men who claimed to abide to the letter by the Word of God, were concerned about whether it was right or not to abandon the three-fold hierarchy that seemed to be founded on the New Testament. As for the means by which the four governors were chosen, our ignorance on the question would be total were it not for an admission Pierre Griot makes in answer to a direct question put by the inquisitor: "Asked who places the four principals of their council;" Griot answers as follows:

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tecta. Primo, an inter verbi Dei ministros debeant ordinari dignitatum gradus, ut puta episcopatus, presbiterii et diaconatus. Videntur enim ab apostolo Timotheo et Tito praecipi, et Christus caput ordinasse super apostolos Petrum interque ipsos apostolos fuisse nonnullos, qui dicebantur columnae. His tamen gradibus inter nos non utimur."

"They are placed by antiquity," probably meaning by age or seniority. We have nothing else to go by.[31]

Hierarchy was present above all in the ordering of their pastoral practice. As we have already seen, and will study in more detail below, the barbes always travelled in twos on their missionary rounds. The two companions, however, were not equals. This can be inferred from the account given by Pierre Griot, who was still in training when he was heard by the inquisitorial tribunal in 1532: "When the preachers set out two by two, there is one who is the principal and the other a simple companion."[32] This is confirmed by the Morel report in 1530: "We observe the following custom however; he who has been received first is wholly and always ahead of he who comes later, in terms of honour, dignity and the ministry, and is established as his master. He who follows will not dare, without the permission of he who went first, touch anything, be it ever so slight, such as drinking water." He returns later to the point: "When we preach, two of us sit together; the older man speaks first, then the other one."[33] This detail in the Waldensians' official report indicates even more than does Pierre Griot speaking of his personal experience, that a hierarchy functioned even within the pair of preachers, and reflected a deliberate structure in the Waldensians' organisation and not just a custom that might be based merely on the primacy of age.

So much for ordinary, daily practice. At the other end of the scale, so to speak, we find the annual synod. It is hard to say exactly when this institution appeared. While nothing is said of it before, the sixteenth century provides several testimonies on the matter, all of which converge on the question of its existence. In the 1530s, its existence was an established fact, but how long had this been so? My own hypothesis is that it came about as a reaction to the extension of the Waldensian diaspora across Europe and its gradual division into two linguistic families, one German-speaking, the other Romance. Only the western side would seem to have adopted the

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[31] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur*, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

[32] G. Audisio, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

[33] V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede dei valdesi riformati*, Torino, Claudiana, 1975, pp. 38–39: "Verum tamen talis mos observatur, ut omnino, qui prius susceptus fuerit, sequentem semper honore, dignitate et administratione praecedat eique magister constituatur" and pp. 42–43: "Cum concionamur, sumus duo simul sedentes; senior prius loquitur; et postea alter."

annual synod bringing together the barbes returning from their mission across the various Waldensian territories of the west: Provence and the Dauphiné, Burgundy, Auvergne, central Italy and the Lyons region perhaps, most certainly Piedmont, Apulia and Calabria. An annual congregation would thus seem to have been set up in answer to the need to adapt to the evolving situation.

"We ministers meet all together once a year to consider our affairs in a general council" asserts the Morel report.[34] This is confirmed by Pierre Griot during his cross-examination of 1532:

> All the barbes and preachers of the said sect assemble once a year between the mountains and lands of Piedmont. And likewise they assembled this last year in Piedmont, in the Luserna valley, in a place called Le Serre, in which place there are but ten or twelve houses. And they assemble always in the month of August and towards the end. And he has heard that they always assemble in this land.[35]

The young man is mistaken on certain counts, the annual meetings, for instance, which had not always taken place in Piedmont; the 1530 meeting was apparently in Mérindol in Provence.[36] Furthermore, the reunions were not always in the month of August, and would even seem to have been more often in September.[37] But there again, they lasted several days, and may well have begun in the last days of August and ended in September. The inquisitor Jean de Roma and the royal commissaries after him, trusting his conclusions, reproduced this information directly in the reports they sent to the court of France. They maintained that the barbes met every year at the end of August in a place called Le Serre. A slight deformation of the facts can be seen here. When Griot speaks of "this land", he probably meant Piedmont, to which he had just referred; the inquisitor believed he was referring to the hamlet itself. Yet there is no doubting that the synod could take place in different places from one year

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[34] V. Vinay, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–40: "Singulis annis semel omnes ministri acervamur in unum, ut generali consilio agenda nostra contractemus."

[35] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur, op. cit.*, p. 103.

[36] G. Gonnet & A. Molnar, *Les vaudois au moyen âge*, Torino, Claudiana, 1974, p. 297: "The Chapter General summoned in 1530 decided on a thorough enquiry. This synod took place in Mérindol in the Lubéron, the centre of powerful Waldensian communities." No source is quoted to justify the localisation of the synod.

[37] "These barbes met ordinarily and held a synod every year, and most often in September . . .", P. Gilles, *Histoire ecclésiastique, op. cit.*, v. 1, p. 25.

to the next: in 1526 it was in Laux, where 140 barbes met, and in 1533 it was in Prali; the 1530 and 1531 synods, however, were apparently in Mérindol.[38]

Returning from their different missions, which we shall be examining below, in the different regions of the western diaspora, the barbes doubtless began by giving accounts of their rounds and what they had learnt there. Thus at the synod of Chanforan, held in 1532, which he had just attended, Pierre Griot stated that there "had been Antoine Guérin, a hosier of Avignon, who told the said company how there was in Provence an inquisitor named master Jean de Roma, who took people from their sect." [39] There can be no doubting the fact that such exchanges of information were of capital interest in the maintaining of unity throughout the community as well as being a way to adapt or answer to the pressing questions of the day.

At the same meeting they reported back on alms given by their followers. Philippe Rey, questioned in Pinerolo in 1451, declared that he and one of his colleagues would collect a "tithe or tribute" each year that they later took to Apulia; in March 1448 and 1449, the sum collected amounted to 300 ducats.[40] As for the inquisitor Jean de Roma, in his *Avertissement* written in 1533 and sent to the Parlement of Provence then to the French court: "We know from revelation or deposition by the accused that the barbes gathered six hundred golden ecus in one year in the dioceses of Apt, Cavaillon and Carpentras."[41] Meanwhile, Morel in his report says of the barbes, "The living, and often those who are at the article of death, offer us a lot of money and other goods."[42] During his trial in 1532, Pierre Griot referred to the sums received, and their double destination; the governors:

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[38] G. Miolo, *Historia breve & vera de gl'affari de i Valdesi delle Valli*, Torino, Claudiana, 1971, p. 100: "Una volta si sono congregati il numero di 140, in un synodo tenuto al valone del Lauso in val Clusone" ("Once when they met they numbered 140, at a synod held in the Laux valley in Val Cluson"). G. Gonnet & A. Molnar, *Les vaudois au moyen âge*, *op. cit.*, pp. 316–317, referring to P. Gilles, *Histoire ecclésiastique des Églises vaudoises* . . ., v. 1, p. 56, where we read: "the assembly general of the pastors and other conductors of the churches of the Alps, it was convoked in Val Saint Martin on August 15, 1533 . . ." On the Mérindol synods, see G. Gonnet, "Mérindol, fine del valdismo?", *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi*, n. 150, December 1981, pp. 27–36.

[39] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur*, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

[40] W. Weitzecker, "Processo di un valdese nell'anno 1451", *op. cit.*, p. 365.

[41] National archives, Paris, J 851, n. 2, f° 14 v°.

[42] V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede dei valdesi riformati*, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–39.

> give them money as much as they require for their journey, and when they return to the congregation the next year, if they have money they have been given while preaching and out in the world, they put it in common before the whole congregation. And the said money is distributed according to the needs of the poor in their sect.[43]

The commissaries of the Parlement of Provence reporting back to the king are attentive to this point when they note that at their annual meeting, the barbes "bring all the money they have gathered and there order that it be distributed to the poor in their sect."[44] The two main purposes of the annual synod were thus to allow information to be exchanged and money donations to be divided up, to which can be added the account that each barbe gave of the mission he had been entrusted with the year before.

The two principal testimonies concord on the issue, the Morel report and Pierre Griot's cross-examination. The young man told the inquisitor that if the preacher had not preached well, "he would be disciplined and if he had taken money from the poor, it would be given back, and also if he has not lived chastely, or if he has scandalised the people, also if he has not been diligent and exemplary. For if he has failed he will be punished or deprived of his preaching mission." Morel likewise states, "Before leaving the said council, we ask forgiveness for our faults, each in turn. When someone has committed a carnal sin, he is expelled from our society. He is forbidden to preach, and we order him to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow."[45] Last of all, the final role of the synod was to receive the new barbes and give to each one and to his companion their mission for the year to come.

Despite what has sometimes been stated, the Waldensian community in the final period of their evolution was not an egalitarian society. This was the case in the earliest days, but it was too bold a position within the social environment of the day which was vehemently opposed to the notion. The whole of medieval society, both

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[43] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur*, *op. cit.*, pp. 104–105.

[44] National archives, Paris, J 851, n° 2, f° 163 v°, published in G. Audisio, "Le rapport des commissaires du roi sur les vaudois" (Aix-en-Provence, 1533), in *I Valdesi e l'Europa*, Torre Pellice, Società di Studi Valdesi, 1982, pp. 137–150.

[45] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur*, *op. cit.*, p. 106; and V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede dei valdesi riformati*, *op. cit.*, pp. 40–41, clearly referring to Gen 3, 19: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."

civil and ecclesiastic, was thoroughly hierarchical. Hierarchy as a principle was so solidly anchored in the mentality of the times that to imagine a reality outside any hierarchical frame was positively unthinkable. For this reason, the Waldensians too came little by little to establish a hierarchy of their own. The structure they opted for evolved over the ages to embrace two clear distinctions. First, the preachers were distinct from the followers; second, there was a double hierarchy within the company of barbes. In the first place, the preachers elected a college of four which led the community, and then, at the basis of the body of preachers, every missionary pair was made up of an older barbe who was above his more recently received companion. In this way a company of barbes grew up, characteristic of the whole Waldensian community, composed of men who embraced a lifestyle that was so particular that we must now turn to see exactly what it meant to live as a barbe.

CHAPTER SIX

THE BARBES' WAY OF LIFE

These all continued with one accord
in prayer and supplication.
Acts 1, 14

What might have impelled a young Waldensian to become a barbe ? The reasons for such motivation escape us, for there exists no testimony in the form of a private journal or similar in which such motives might be recorded. We can only presume that it must have been the example of preachers with whom the community came into contact that first inspired such aspirations. This would be perfectly logical, after all, since it is the way things happen in any community, and above all in religious communities. "Vocation" is born of example, thus maintaining a phenomenon that, to borrow a concept we owe to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu but applying it outside the domain of teaching, which was his field of reflection, we might refer to as "reproduction".[1] A system of imitation ensured the barbes' life and mission elicited new candidates. And so recruitment was assured, various features of which we have already evoked above.

Aged between 25 and 30, a young man of good reputation from the Waldensian community, doubtless encouraged by a preacher he had encountered, would express his intention to become a barbe. Recommended by one or several others, he would then be admitted for a three- to four-year training period covering both theoretical and practical matters as we saw in the previous chapter. The testimony left by Morel, quoted above, described the procedure quite fully, emphasising both the candidate's personal implication and the necessary approbation of all the preachers. Once his teachers could vouchsafe for him, and after a probationary period with the "sisters", he was officially received as a barbe.

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[1] P. Bourdieu & J.-C. Passeron, *La reproduction; éléments pour une théorie du système d'enseignement*, Paris, Les éditions de Minuit, 1970.

Investiture

As we know, the ceremony took place during the annual synod. The barbe Pierre, taken prisoner and interrogated in Oulx in 1492, gave the following account when asked how they became barbes:

> Before practising their art, they go out into the world with other learned barbes and then they are presented to their grand master who, having consulted with the other barbes, if they are deemed capable, will give them the power to hear confession, preach and absolve; having obtained permission from this authority, the master drinks first then he offers drink to the new barbe, and the others barbes in succession drink too, and then they feast, eating and drinking.[2]

His companion, the barbe Martin who was arrested with him, proved more forthcoming, giving a host of details, noteworthy among which is his account of the oath which the new barbes must swear:

> He says too that, when they are made barbes by their *comite*, the master of masters summons certain barbes to him . . . who speak and swear the oath in the following way: "You, named such and such, swear by your faith to maintain, multiply and expand our law and to reveal it to no one in the world and you promise not to take God's name in vain in any way and to respect Sunday and not to do unto anyone what you would not wish to be done unto you and you believe in God who made the sun and the moon, the sky and the earth, the cherubim and seraphim and all you see." And having made this vow, the grand master gives the barbe named above a little wine to drink.[3]

This is summed up rather more laconically in the Morel report: "The said disciples, after the Eucharist and laying on of hands, are admitted to the ministry of presbyter and preaching and, thus prepared and trained, they are sent out to evangelise, two by two."[4]

It is striking that as we have already seen, Morel makes no mention of one single superior, but uses a plural as if to emphasise that the

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[2] M. Benedetti: "L'interrogatorio dei barba Martino e Pietro (1492)", *in* G. Tourn, *Il barba*, XVII febbraio 2001, Torino, Claudiana, 2001, pp. 60–61.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 57: "Tu talis iura super la fede tua de mantenere, multiplicare et accrescere nostra lege et de non la discoprire a persona dal mondo et que tu prometes de non iurare Dieu anul modo et que garda la domenega et que non faray alto visino cosa que non vuelho que sie fato a te et que tu credie en Dieu que a fato el sol e la luna, celum et terram, cherubini et seraphini et aquel que tu vedes."

[4] V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede dei valdesi riformati*, Torino, Claudiana, 1975, pp. 38–39: "Consumpto autem hoc tempore, eucharistiæ sacramento impositioneque manuum discipuli prædicti suscipiuntur in presbyterii et prædicationis officium et hoc modo instructi ac edocti ad evangelizandum bini emittuntur."

direction of the community was collegial, as was the origin of the barbes' power and the mission with which they had been entrusted. On the other hand, he does underline that the ceremony was accompanied by the "sacrament of the Eucharist", which is rather problematic. To understand this reference correctly, we should bear in mind what the barbe Martin had declared earlier: "The barbes and those who are from their sect do not receive the Eucharist, but instead of the Eucharist they bless the bread and they say this blessing is of greater value than consecration on the grounds that the better someone is, the more powerful he is."[5] By "Eucharist", we should thus understand "blessing" here. Nevertheless, the Waldensians did attribute the value of a sacrament to the blessed bread, as the Morel report makes clear.

It was during the ceremony of investiture that an important event took place: the changing of the young man's name as he became a barbe. On this point, all testimonies concur. First amongst these, the barbes who evoked the issue, while the Morel report says nothing at all. The two barbes cross-examined separately in Oulx both refer to it. The barbe Martin declared, "When their grand master, whom they call *comite*, makes them barbes and gives them power, he changes their name; thus had he, before being made a barbe by their said *comite*, been called Francesco and when he became a barbe he had been given the name Martin." A little later during the interrogatory, he returned to the issue, this time to specify that, once the vow had been taken and the wine drunk, the grand master "at that moment changes his name, saying 'henceforth you will be called such and such.' And he who is speaking, was previously called Francesco and now, amongst themselves, he was called Martin; and this ceremony was in the place of baptism."[6] We shall be returning to this last remark later, to consider its implications. As for the barbe Pierre, speaking about the ceremony of investiture, he admitted that, "On this occasion, their name was changed; thus he, before, had been called Jean and was now called Pierre."[7] Henceforth, these men were known by these names alone, and to this day, we most often identify them by their barbe's name, as we saw above.

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[5] M. Benedetti, *op. cit.*, p. 56. It is interesting here to note the Donatist tendency evoked above in chapter 2 in the study of the Waldensians' religious sensibility.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 55 and p. 57 respectively.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

The question of changing names deserves comment, for the act of naming is never fortuitous. Prior to a new name being attributed, there were lengthy discussions, considered essential, as names were chosen for those who had been born again. This implies that the stakes, although symbolical, were nonetheless crucial. Giving a name is an act of appropriation. When, in the beginning of the world, God chose to make man the king of his creation, he gave him the right to name all the animals:

> And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all the cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field . . . (Genesis 2: 19–20).

If the initial choice of a name is of such import, how much more so is the act of changing it. That is what masters in ancient times did with their slaves, thereby marking their proprietorial rights; the practice lasted for centuries. Similarly, when a master freed one of his slaves, he restored his former name to him. When the monastic orders established that a novice embarking on his religious life should change his name, it was as a sign that the new monk had been reborn and belonged absolutely to God, to whom he devoted himself by taking the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. This would explain the fact that the barbe referred to above should liken the ceremony to a baptism. The example of the Gospels again fully justified this tradition. When John took his brother to Jesus, "Jesus beheld him, [and] he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation stone" (John 1: 42). This practice, the religious signification of which is obvious, was also a measure of prudence, for it would embroil inquisitorial enquiries. It makes our work more difficult too, for barbes are often referred to only by their Christian names. In any case, it is a feature which reminds us that the barbes really constituted a form of religious order. This is made all the more apparent by the fact that the barbe's vows and undertakings were intriguingly similar to those pronounced, even to this day, by the Roman Catholic regular clergy.

The Three Vows

In the Church of Rome, the rule of three religious vows, which dated back to the hermits of Saint Augustine, was gradually adopted by all monastic orders: chastity, poverty and obedience. As far as the Waldensians were concerned, such strictures are not just presumed from what we know of the lives led by the barbes. During the cross-examination of Pierre Griot, the young man still training to be a barbe, he evokes the question clearly and precisely: "The barbes promise God poverty, chastity and obedience."[8] There is no need to comment on the question of obedience, for we saw above how this precept governed both the whole body of barbes, and thus the community itself with its college of four superiors, and also each individual missionary partnership.

There is nothing surprising either about poverty being given pre-eminence amongst the "Poor of Lyons". The barbe Morel is clear about this in his report:

> Our food and the clothes we wear, in largely sufficient quantities, are given to us freely, as alms from the people whom we teach . . . All our temporal goods, which are quite abundant as a result of alms from the folk mentioned above, as I said earlier, ensure we eat abundantly, and we ministers share this amongst ourselves. The living, and often those who are at the article of death, offer us a lot of money and other goods, but I never have the heart to accept anything from the dying.[9]

There is nothing to let us suppose that things occurred any differently in their everyday lives. The barbes really did live in poverty, thanks to their followers' generosity. This was not always problem-free, and difficulties could arise which troubled the leaders, such as the question of gifts from the dying which must have been contested sometimes by the heirs. The custom was doubtless widespread, but was probably limited to wishes expressed orally. In fact, in the 195 wills dictated by Provençal Waldensians from the south of the Luberon between 1460 and 1560, I could find no trace of bequests to the barbes. On the other hand Catherine, wife of Thomas Lantelme from the Chisone valley, was asked by the inquisitor whether Waldensians sometimes gave legacies to the barbes in their wills. She answered, "Yes, 5, 6

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[8] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur. Procès du barbe vaudois Pierre Griot par l'inquisiteur Jean de Roma (Apt, 1532)*, Aix-en-Provence, Edisud, 1979, p. 109.

[9] V. Vinay, *Le confessioni . . .*, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–39.

and sometimes 7 *gros*." She would appear here to be speaking of an established habit.[10]

As far as chastity was concerned, the barbes pledged to remain chaste when they were invested, and henceforth had to respect their promise. That it was difficult to stand by, and even a burden sometimes is made clear by Morel himself when, with confidence and great honesty he admits, "None of us gets married. And yet, to speak openly and sincerely (for I do speak to you with much trust) we are not always treated chastely.[11] That Morel should assimilate celibacy and chastity is revealing of the moral conceptions of the times, for the two do not necessarily go together, in our era for instance. In any case, the barbes did not marry. When the inquisitor asked Pierre Griot if he was married, for example, he answered that he was not.[12] His reply, however inconsequent it might appear to us, in fact throws suspicion at once on the accused, for in the society of the times, only consecrated celibacy was valorised.

The three religious vows, pronounced before the entire assembly when the barbes met for their annual synod must have constituted a formidable event in the life of the young barbe, and a solemn undertaking. The candidate was no longer the young man whom everyone had known until then; he had become a leader, a preacher, in short a barbe, whose status was henceforth outstanding within the Waldensian community. It was not just his name that changed, but his status, his function, almost the very nature of the man.

Pious Men

We can but be intrigued by the sort of lives these men must have lived amongst themselves. Yet we would have little access to such matters, were it not for the details Morel gives when he presents their ways to the Reformers to whom he appealed in 1530. He evokes his and his fellows' daily lives in the following terms:

> Every morning and every evening, before and after meals, at midday and sometimes by night, when we are awake, and after preaching

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[10] Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4350, f° 117 v°: November 16, 1487.

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 38–39. The Latin text reads: "non semper caste nobiscum agitir;" the translation into Italian, however, reads, "non sempre viviamo castamente."

[12] G. Audisio, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

> before an assembly of people, we are accustomed to kneel and pray, in all humility, for the space of a quarter of an hour approximately; and when we wish to drink or eat, we nearly all say the Lord's Prayer. And in truth, we do not pray thus out of superstition or from vain faith, or to respect a given time: we are driven by the glory of God and the usefulness of the soul.[13]

The last remark is intriguing. In the presence of the Reformers to whom his remarks are addressed, Morel appears ill at ease, needing to justify the practice. Why should this be? The foremost reason is doubtless that to the ears of the Reformers, who were all former clerics, the statement might sound surprising and cannot but recall the divine office which structured the day, chanted by monks and, in its shortened version (the breviary) recited by the priests: matins during the night, laudes at dawn, prime at sunrise (about 6 am), tierce at 9 am, sext at midday, nones at 3 pm, vespers at nightfall before the evening meal and complines before bed. If we look closely, the prayer times evoked by Morel are similar to those respected by monks: morning, before and after dinner, before and after supper, and in the evening: that is six times; sometimes a nightly prayer would be added, which would bring them perfectly into line with the seven "hours". This would explain why the Reformers might be sceptical about the arrangement of prayers throughout the day. Nonetheless, interrogated by the inquisitor, Pierre Griot evoked his fellow traveller, the hosier of Avignon Antoine Guérin, saying, "he had erred because he had taught him and led him to believe that he should not believe in the Roman Church nor in its ceremonies, vespers, complines, matins, tierce, sext, nones and the others likewise, and he was to believe in the Scriptures alone."[14] His statement becomes clearer if we bear in mind first that Griot is attributing these words to Antoine Guérin, and second, that Guérin was in fact a former Dominican, who had become a barbe, which is something of an exception. Furthermore, it is worth wondering how it is that Griot knew the hours so well. Meanwhile Griot does confirm the pre-eminence of prayer in their daily lives: "The barbes' custom, and they persuade their people likewise, is never to drink nor eat nor do anything else before first having prayed to God."[15]

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[13] V. Vinay, *Le confessioni . . ., op. cit.*, pp. 38–39.
[14] G. Audisio, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 109.

It comes as no surprise to learn that the Lord's Prayer was at the centre of the barbes' religious practice, for, as we saw concerning the followers, it was practically the only prayer the Waldensians abided by. They were indeed reluctant to adopt the *Ave Maria*, which, at best they reduced to the angelic salutation and the words of Elisabeth, taken from Luke 1, 28 and 42. The explanation is perfectly straightforward, for it is a question of evangelism: they retained only what was found directly in the Scriptures.[16]

This is not to say the barbes' piety was limited to a few evangelical formulas. It was enriched too with all sorts of readings, much of which has been preserved as a series of manuscripts conventionally, but inaccurately referred to as the barbes' library, or the Waldensian library. We shall be returning to this, at the heart of which was unsurprisingly the Word of God, in the next chapter. Suffice it to say for the moment that the barbes' lives, and each individual day, was structured around, and infused with, times of prayer.

An Itinerant Trade

There is another striking element in the daily lives of these decidedly idiosyncratic men. All testimonies concur on the fact that the barbes exercised some sort of professional activity. One's first hypothesis could be to presume it was a mere screen or ruse, designed to let them move about more easily, justifying the constant renewal of their travels and so deflecting the suspicions of the authorities who were always wary of migrants, as they were of instability in any other form. Several indications as to their professional activities are available. In 1451, Philippe Rey from the Saint Martin valley and François Aydet from Perouse were haberdashers, and as such, very probably pedlars.[17] The pastor and writer G. Miolo, writing at the end of the sixteenth century, lists as trades carried out by the barbes such activ-

[16] Two affirmations made by Pierre Griot during his trial are worth noting here: "Says that it is better to pray to the patron than to the squire and that the Virgin Mary was blessed among all women, but that God had not given her the grace to pray for us"; "The Waldensians say that you should not pray to the Virgin Mary nor to the Saints of Heaven, but to God alone." (G. Audisio, *op. cit.*, pp. 82–83 and 149 respectively).

[17] G. Weitzecker, Processo di un valdese nell'anno 1451, *Rivista Cristiana*, 1881, pp. 363–367.

ities as making wooden spoons, purses and needle-cases for women.[18] Cross-examined in 1532, the future barbe Pierre Griot declared he was first a muleteer, ideally compatible with itinerancy.[19]

In his anti-Waldensian treatise written in 1533, the inquisitor Jean de Roma insists on this specific feature of the barbes. He writes, "Thirdly, they are all workers, or have some trade or craft or are merchants or shoemakers or cobblers or blacksmiths or doctors or herbalists or some are barbers or surgeons or have some other profession."[20] The Waldensians themselves corroborate this, for example in the Morel report, written in 1530, which states, "We engage in various manual labours to condescend to the people and to avoid idleness."[21] There can thus be no doubting the fact that the barbes continued to work on a daily basis, preferably a trade that entailed itinerancy, although we have no exact idea of what the real motivation behind this was. There were doubtless several factors that came into consideration. There is good reason to presume however, that, bearing in mind the importance the Waldensians gave to biblical references, particularly from the New Testament, the apostle Paul himself may well have been their model; while he acknowledged that missionaries should be entitled to subsistence, he himself always sought to work with his hands, so as to be a burden to no one and as a pledge of his disinterestedness.[22]

If we now look more closely at these professions, the care of the sick would seem to figure prominently. Doctor, surgeon and barber are frequently cited as the barbes' trades. It is a feature Peter Biller has drawn attention to already.[23] Various testimonies, whether given as declarations during cross-examination or in wills, attest that the Waldensians were genuinely concerned for the sick and infirm. It was

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[18] G. Miolo, *Historia breve & vera de gl'affari de i valdesi delle valli*, a cura di E. Balmas, Turin, 1971, p. 102.

[19] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur . . ., op. cit.*, p. 71.

[20] National Archives, Paris, J 851, n° 2, f° 14: "Tertio, omnes sunt operarii seu alicuius negocii vel ministerii vel desserunt merces aut sunt sutorie artis aut calcerarii aut fabri aut medici aut arematorii aut certi tonsores barbarum et sirurgini aut alicuius alterius ministerii."

[21] V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede . . ., op. cit.*, pp. 38–39.

[22] Acts 18, 3: "And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers" and 1 Cor. 4, 12: ". . . and labour, working with our own hands . . ."

[23] P. Biller, "*Curate infirmos*: The Medieval Waldensian Practice of Medicine" *Studies in Church History*, XIX, Oxford, 1982, pp. 55–77, reprinted in P. Biller (ed.), *The Waldenses, 1170–1530*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2001, pp. 49–67.

likewise in keeping with the medieval tradition that the Waldensian preachers should care for those members of the community who were sick in body.

There are several, completely independent testimonies bearing out the fact in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Tried for heresy in 1487, Odin Crespin from Freissinières came to explain how, some years before, he had had something wrong with his leg. His uncle had thereupon offered to take him to see a man, a man of learning, who would quickly cure him. There followed a private discussion between the sick man and a barbe called Michel, who "then wanted to see his ailing tibia and said to him: if you will do as I tell you, you shall be healed." And he told him he would apply a herb named *miltalha*."[24] As mentioned briefly above, Jean de Roma underlined in his treatise that the barbes were doctors, herbalists, barbers or surgeons. He noted this in particular concerning the future barbe Pierre Griot whom he had interrogated in 1532. At one point Griot declared, "Two years since, seeing that his industry had taught him to heal certain wounds, he had wanted to become a barber and with this intention had come to our land;" a little later, concerning an object found in the house where the suspect had been taken, "Asked about the barber's case,—Said it was his own."[25] The Morel report seems to bear the point out, when it states, "When someone is sick, if we are called, we visit him to console him with exhortations and prayers; and sometimes we visit the infirm, even if we are not called, knowing their state, to bring them spiritual and physical relief."[26]

If we turn to Waldensian literature, such as has survived to this day, we similarly find the question of the barbes' trades evoked. Three folios of a Waldensian manuscript now in Cambridge, dating probably from the fifteenth century, make up a form of manual on medicines, setting out the composition, means of preparation, use and expected results. Peter Biller sums up the contents as follows:

> Firstly, there are the instructions (ingredients, their quantities, and boiling) for making an ointment to be applied to wounds, and a description of its efficacy. Secondly, there is the description of the use of a plaster (against carbuncles, shingles, and other ailments), and instructions (ingredients and their grinding) for making it. Thirdly, there is the description

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[24] Cambridge University Library, 26 H 2, f° 8.
[25] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur . . ., op. cit.*, pp. 71 et 77.
[26] V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede dei valdesi riformati . . ., op. cit.*, pp. 42–43.

> of the use of a distillation as an expectorant, against colds, etc., followed by instructions for its preparation (ingredients, their crushing, mixing with wine). Fourthly, there is an account of the manifold use of the herb tormentil, either in its powders or in the liquid of its decoction, against catarrh, wounds, stomach upsets, scabs, fever, toothache, and other ailments.[27]

The late sixteenth-century pastor and historian G. Miolo equally speaks of the arts exercised by the Waldensian preachers, amongst which we find medicine and surgery. Writing in the seventeenth century, P. Gilles also notes that: "Each . . . was trained in some form of trade and especially in medicine and surgery, wherein they were frequently consulted and greatly esteemed."[28]

We can thus affirm that the barbes were particularly attentive to the sick, the infirm and the injured, and they developed skills that would enable them to bring solace. How might such a professional orientation be explained? Peter Biller draws on the Waldensians' evangelism, linking their professional choices to the instructions of Christ, "Heal the sick," (Matt 10, 8). This would inscribe the Waldensians within the long medieval tradition of hospital orders.

My personal belief is that such a preoccupation with healing the body also issues from the Waldensians' reticence concerning the cult of the Virgin Mary and the saints, which is borne out in several testimonies. For example, among the chief accusations levelled against Pierre Griot in 1532, possibly undeservedly at that, we find, "He has maintained that one should not pray to the saints who have no grace to obtain for us anything whatsoever from God; he has maintained that it is pointless to set images of saints in churches; he has maintained that no feast-day but Sunday should be celebrated."[29] The Waldensians thus deprived themselves of the use of therapeutic saints, a popular and widespread practice. And with no saints to turn to, they appealed to their preachers.

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[27] P. Biller, *Curate infirmos* . . ., in *The Waldenses*, *op. cit.*, p. 63. Tormentil: a medicinal plant, *Potentilla tormentilla*.

[28] G. Miolo, *op. cit.*, p. 102; P. Gilles, *Histoire ecclésiastique des Églises vaudoises* . . ., Geneva, 1644; published by Pignerol, 1881, 2 vol., vol. 1, p. 24: "Chacun . . . avoit la connoissance de quelque mestier et spécialement de médecine et chirurgie, en quoy ils estoient fort entendus et en grand estime."

[29] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur* . . ., *op. cit.*, pp. 91–92.

Secrecy

All things considered, the characteristic that must have most marked the barbes was probably their clandestinity. To begin with this was a feature of the community at large. Since the first coercive measures taken against them, the Waldensians had survived for centuries hiding their religious dissent. This reflected their will to survive, of course, but it is also a reflection on their own particular religious sensibility, where emphasis was laid on their inner disposition rather than on any outward display of belief. We know, for example, that the Waldensians made no difficulties about asking their parish priest to baptise their children, marry them, accompany their dead to the cemetery or even to have mass said for the salvation of their souls. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, this was the case as far as the Provençal Waldensians were concerned, for instance, much as it might run counter to their declarations concerning their adamant rejection in theoretical terms of purgatory.

When contacts were made with the Reformers in 1530, Oecolampadius, the Basel Reformer, wrote to the barbes as follows: "We have heard it said that, out of fear of your persecutors, you dissimulate your faith to such an extent, and hide it, that you even take communion with the infidel and you attend their abominable masses, where you have learnt to blaspheme the death and the passion of Christ."[30] Indeed, Morel and Masson had acknowledged as much themselves in the letter they had sent him:

> It is not we who administer the signs of the sacrament to our people: it is the members of the Antichrist. Yet we explain to them the spiritual meaning of the sacraments as much as we can and we exhort them not to trust in any way in the antichristian meetings and to pray that they might not be deemed to be in sin when they find themselves obliged to hear and see the abominations of the Antichrist; that an abomination of this sort should soon been confounded, that truth may come in its place and that the Word of God may come to pass.[31]

Such dissimulation as this, which became traditional amongst the Waldensians, evolving into an entire lifestyle, enables us to understand how they managed to survive, and how persecution never became permanent or generalised. Apparently, so long as they could also count

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[30] V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede . . ., op. cit.*, pp. 52–53.
[31] V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede . . ., op. cit.*, pp. 42–43.

on their neighbours' turning a blind eye from time to time, the Waldensians could pass themselves off as ordinary Christians, fulfilling the required rites as was expected of all parishioners, first amongst which was the obligation to attend mass on Sundays and feast days.

Can we, for all that, go so far as to speak of their "Nicodemite" tendencies, as some have done?[32] From the 1540s onwards, a trend emerged, amongst those seeking new religious paths verging on Roman orthodoxy, who, faced with the growing risks of separation, aimed to lead a double life and even to justify dissimulation. John Calvin, in his *Epistolæ duæ de rebus hoc sæculo apprime necessariis*, published in Basel in 1537 and addressed to Nicolas Duchemin, condemned the position such men had adopted in the belief they could strike a balance with truth and hover halfway between Babylon and the Gospel. If this sort of situation did, then, exist, it was not until 1544 that it was brought to a close with Calvin's polemical treatise entitled, *Excuse to the Nicodemites*.[33] The Reformer was drawing his inspiration directly from the Gospel of John, more precisely from the episode where a member of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus, came by night to see Jesus, no doubt fearing to lose face amongst his colleagues. It was an attitude that some Christians had adopted as a precept, when they sought both to follow the spirit of the Reformation, whilst abiding by the institutions of Rome. Calvin's answer to such tergiversations was that the Christian was bound absolutely to live in accordance with doctrine. From the opening words, the tone is set: "A man of faith who converses among the papists cannot communicate with their superstitions without offending God." Years later, the *Histoire ecclésiastique* evokes the affair in the following terms:

> John Calvin, knowing how many were flattering themselves in their infirmity, going as far as to pollute themselves with the manifest abominations of the Roman Church, had in a certain written statement taxed them too acerbically to their tastes. Some, therefore, who have since

[32] See for example P. Paravy, *De la chrétienté romaine à la Réforme en Dauphiné*, Rome, École Française de Rome, 1993, 2 v., v. 2, ch. XX, III, D: « Le nicodémisme des Vaudois » (p. 1082) and more recently, A. Tortora, *Presenze valdesi nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia (secoli XV–XVII)*, Salerno, Laveglia editore, 2004, *passim*, for instance p. 97: "comportamento nicodemitico adottato dai valdesi medievali", p. 98: "la prassi nicodemitica dei valdesi", etc.; the author was clearly aware of the difficulty, however, when he writes: "un atteggiamento nicodemetico o, meglio sarebbe dire, dissimulatorio" ("a nicodemite, or to put it better, dissimulatory way of behaving"), p. 96.

[33] *Excuse de Jean Calvin à messieurs les Nicodémites sur la complainte qu'ils font de sa trop grand rigueur*.

> been called Nicodemites, maintained that it was acceptable to go to mass, so long as the heart did not consent and with other conditions I no longer remember; others on the contrary said that you should serve God pure of mind and body, and steer clear of all pollution.[34]

Scholars have long explored the debate, notably attempting to establish its context so as better to understand it, and also to define Nicodemism. C. Ginzburg, for example, defines the position as "a point-by-point theorisation of religious simulation and dissimulation."[35] Does disguising one's convictions to fool the enemy make one a Nicodemite? A. Biondi considers the Nicodemite position to entail first, a constricted situation and a clear consciousness of this situation along with the impossibility to get over it any other way. And second, a scission in the individual's or the group's behaviour, whereby there is no communication between the internal and external parts.

A doctrine of licit simulation and dissimulation, however, presupposes that a distinction has been made between those behavioural features that are indifferent or secondary, and those that are essential for a Christian, which is rather problematic. As Biondi puts it so succinctly, "On the path that leads from Nicodemus, Tartuffe is also to be encountered."[36]

Does this amount to saying the Waldensians were Nicodemites? We have seen that Nicodemism implies justifying dissimulation. The testimonies we have, however, such as those by Morel and Pierre Griot, rather suggest the barbes were ashamed of their double life; the only justification they can give is their fear of persecution, and they regret what they see as a weakness, Morel even underlying the fact that they were "constrained" to live like this, as we saw above. In other words, the Waldensians did indeed dissimulate their religious dissent, as they did participate in Roman ceremonies, but far from being proud of such compromises or even justifying them, they deplored them. For this reason, in the context of the sixteenth century when the concept emerged, it is mistaken to label the Waldensians Nicodemites.

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[34] *Histoire ecclésiastique des églises réformées au royaume de France*, Anvers, 1581, 3 v., v. 1, pp. 48–49.

[35] C. Ginzburg, *Il nicodemismo. Simulazione e dissimulazione religiosa nell'Europa del'500*, Torino, Einaudi 1970, p. 160.

[36] A. Biondi, La giustificazione della simulazione nel Cinquecento, *in Eresia e Riforma nell'Italia del Cinquecento*, Corpus reformatorum italicorum, Miscellanea I, Firenze-Cicago, 1974, pp. 7–68.

As a whole, the Waldensians had over the centuries established the tradition of dissimulating their dissent from the dominant, imperious Church of Rome. To ensure their survival, they came gradually to perfect a whole series of measures, precautions and habits designed to preserve their identity; at the price of lip service paid to the prevailing customs they appeared to keep up, they managed to survive from generation to generation, with their continuity assured, as we have seen, more through family tradition than by new conversions. There can be no doubting the fact that the core of their dissenting spirit, as well as its transmission, relied on the barbes. More than their flocks, these men were reduced to a life in hiding. From here, a difficulty arose which verged on a real dilemma, if not to say a contradiction, for how could preaching be made compatible with secrecy? The Waldensian community had to resolve this problem, and resolve it they did, for thereon depended their future, relying as it did on the mission with which the preachers were entrusted.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE MISSION

Where two or three are gathered together in my name,
then am I in the midst of them.
Matthew 18, 20

Their mission was very much the sum and substance of the barbes' existence. It was bestowed upon them by the entire community of believers who, by providing for their needs by way of alms-giving, equally showed their thorough approval of their preachers, and their absolute confidence in the crucial role they played and the vital importance of their existence. From a more formal angle, their mission was attributed by the whole body of barbes, and then, in the fifteenth century, by a superior general, and later still by the college of four governors. Before focusing on the real object of their mission, we shall begin by examining the conditions in which they exercised.

In Hiding

As we have seen, the Waldensian community at large did not of course live in absolute clandestinity; they lived rather within other populations, alongside whom they were eking out a daily existence. At the same time, they painstakingly dissimulated their religious dissent, which, in those days, amounted to taking a major risk, even putting their lives in peril. We know they were uneasy about their secrecy, and regretted the measures they had to take out of fear, to the extent that a double life became for them a whole lifestyle. Their preachers were more severely constrained to live in hiding, to the extent that it became an ever-present and even a predominant preoccupation in their day-to-day lives.

Over the years and the generations, different measures were tried and perfected. First, as we have seen, the barbes changed their names. Second, they exercised a trade requiring itinerancy, thus justifying their constant travels, which were always seen with a suspicious eye,

not only by the cautious local authorities but also by the populations at large, attached as they were to their lands and to a sense of local identity. Of course, the prime motivation behind the change of name, as behind their travels, was spiritual, directly inspired by the Scriptures, but there can be no doubting the fact that such measures also corresponded to the need to cover their tracks.

The itinerant nature of the mission made it far more difficult to identify and pursue the clandestine preachers. As we saw above, they were sent out two by two. Another detail is given, which we find in Morel's report: "We change our places of residence two by two, for we never stay more than two or three years in the same place, unless where old men are concerned, whom we sometimes allow to stay in the same place until the end of their lives."[1] Jean de Roma in his 1533 treatise puts things as follows: "The afore-mentioned preachers never come two years running to the same province so as not to be recognised, but they are expedited from province to province. Thus when one leaves a province, the following year another arrives."[2] While the two testimonies differ on the length of a stay in one and the same region, the principle whereby the barbes changed places by rotation is confirmed. We can in any case set greater store by Morel's account, speaking as he was from within the Waldensian community and from personal experience, than by the inquisitor's. There can of course have been other reasons behind the barbes' frequent change of location. For one thing, they had taken a vow of chastity and were bound by their celibacy: by having them move systematically from one place to another, the risk of their striking up more intimate links was reduced or even prevented. Here again, their itinerant mode of life, as Jean de Roma notes, may have helped them to evade indiscretion and denunciation, but it most certainly hindered persecution.

All sorts of other measures helped the barbes dissimulate their mission. G. Miolo's *Histoire brève et vraie* . . . to which we referred above, is constructed as a dialogue setting out their cause. In answer

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[1] V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede dei valdesi riformati*, Torino, Claudiana, 1975, pp. 38–39.

[2] Paris, National Archives, J 851, n. 2, f° 14 v°: "Octavo, prefati predicatores numquam veniunt per duos annos consecutive in eadem provincia ne agnoscantur sed mutantur de provincia in provinciam sic tantum quam recedente uno ab una provincia anno sequente venit alius."

to question 8, "In which places did the said barbes preach, and what was the nature of these places?", he gives the following explanation:

> They preached in winter in the villages and in the houses of the said barbes, which were very secret places, with concealed doors to get in and out from one house to another, and here they preached only by night for they feared to be discovered. But in the summer they preached in the mountains where most people went with their flocks. And when the said barbes went by paths where they might be recognised, they travelled by night, or by day but by indirect routes with their guides and companions.[3]

In other words, it would appear that as they travelled round, the barbes did not call at houses at random. As they reached a neighbourhood or sector, they needed, by way of precaution, to identify Waldensian families. Here we can doubtless find an explanation for their travelling in twos. The more experienced barbe would already know where to find the homes of their flocks, having already called there previously. Had they had to make enquiries from house to house, they would inevitably have awakened unwanted curiosity. We know, for instance, that Pierre Griot, while still in training, travelled back to Provence from Piedmont with a fellow barbe called Jean Gérault. This travelling companion knew the house in Lourmarin, in Provence, to which they were heading, for he told the younger man, "that good friends of his lived in the house, he knew them well, they were good people and they would find a good welcome there." And indeed, as Griot confirmed, "they were welcomed warmly and then given drinks and food too."[4]

Even allowing for such precautions, it would appear that the barbes did not call randomly at any Waldensian house but only at certain homes, to which Miolo refers as "barbes' houses". This expression cannot be taken to mean homes belonging to barbes since, as we

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[3] G. Miolo, *Historia breve & vera de gl'affari de i valdesi delle valli*, a cura di E. Balmas, Torino, 1971, pp. 100–101: "In quali luoghi i detti Barba predicavano et quale fosse la forma di detti luoghi?—Essi predicavano l'invernata a i villagi, e nelle case di detti Barba, le quali erano molto secrette, havevano delle secrette porte per intrare et uscire d'una casa in un'altra et ivi predicavano solamente di notte a causa ch'essi temevano d'esser scoperti. Ma ne l'estate essi predicavano nelle montagne dove la gente si ritirava con loro bestiame per la maggior parte. Et quando i detti Barba andavano per strada dove potevano esser conosciuti essi andavano di notte, o di giorno, ma per vie oblique con le loro guide et compagni."

[4] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur. Procès du barbe vaudois Pierre Griot par l'inquisiteur Jean de Roma (Apt, 1532)*, Aix-en-Provence, Edisud, 1979, p. 86.

know, they had taken an oath of poverty. It must therefore be understood to mean "houses visited by barbes." Does this amount to saying, as has been suggested, that there existed a real "network of Waldensian hospices" intended to receive barbes as they went on their rounds?[5] While this would certainly not have been a properly established ring of guesthouses, it is quite possible that certain houses, perhaps better equipped and more isolated than others, were allotted this role. A number of hints to this effect can be found in certain testimonies. The house in the outskirts of Lourmarin in the Provençal Luberon where Pierre Griot was arrested certainly intrigued the court. The suspect had indeed declared that this isolated farmstead, called a *bastide* in Provence, possessed "a fine bedroom with a fireplace, but he did not know why it had been prepared, with two beds." The traditional Provençal *bastide* usually counted only one heated room, the main room called the "salle". To dispose of a second fireplace, furthermore in an available room equipped with two beds, would have been a luxury indeed—the notion of a "guests' bedroom" is a far more recent concept. The courtroom, too found the matter suspicious, for the judge declared to the suspect that "he had been found in the house to which the barbes come."[6]

While certain testimonies evoke "a house", others refer merely to a "chamber". During his interrogatory in March 1525 near Pinerolo in Piedmont, Jacques Ressent, from Bec Dauphin, explained how in the mountains he had met a man who invited him to come and visit him the following Sunday, telling him to go to the village of Bovile and to address himself there to Alasina Ribbe; she would show him the way. When the day came, he spoke to the woman, telling her, "that a man had told him to address himself to her so that she might tell him how to find the chamber of Bovile where the barbes and masters of the Waldensian sect would meet. Then the above-named Alasina showed him the house and he went there." He later refers to it as "the said chamber of the barbes and masters of the said sect." Bovile, however, was not the only locality to have such a chamber at its disposal. Previously, the suspect had evoked "the chamber and house

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[5] G. Gonnet & A. Molnar, *Les vaudois au Moyen Âge*, Torino, Claudiana, 1974, pp. 194–195: the authors are however speaking of such a network in the 14th–15th century for the eastern wing of the Waldensian diaspora.

[6] G Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur . . ., op. cit.*, p. 86, and p. 89: "The *Procurator* says that nobody has complained about him but he was found in the house where the barbes hide."

of the barbes in Clot Meerii" in Saint Martin valley and later referred to "the chamber of the said barbes in Rodoretto."[7] Thus we find confirmation of the existence of houses or chambers, a term for which no more precise definition can be found in existing documents, but which would appear here to be synonymous with "house",[8] more particularly adapted to receive the barbes.

The general situation was not quite the same, going by a testimony made by Peyronette, from Beauregard in the Valentinois. Questioned in 1494, she admitted to having met barbes on nine or ten occasions in twenty-five years. When asked by the inquisitor to give further detail, she declared she had met them sometimes in the house of Talmon Pascal and Guillaume Pascal and on another occasion in the house of Pierre Garnier, both in the same vicinity of Beauregard.[9] We can thus surmise that, while certain neighbourhoods disposed of a house equipped to receive the barbes, it was not a general rule. Whatever the case, the preachers had established habits and sought hospitality amidst certain families, doubtless where security was greater or more room was available.

They had also to solve the question of where to stay during their travels before they reached the region to which their mission sent them; this inevitably meant crossing areas where hospitality was uncertain or where no Waldensian houses liable to take them in could be found. When this was the case, they stayed like any other travellers in inns or hostelries. Pierre Griot, for instance, asked by the inquisitor where he and his companion Jean Gérault had lodged on their way back to Provence from Piedmont once they had left La Saulce, replied: "In Sisteron in Saint Marc, and from Sisteron they came to lodge in Manosque in Le Sauvage." This can be understood as follows: in the town of Sisteron they stayed at the inn called "The Saint Marc", and in Manosque at the inn called "Le Sauvage". Would this correspond to daily itineraries? It would seem likely in

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[7] G. Marini Nevache, "Per un sacchetto di castagne. La 'responsio Jacobi Resandi de Bechio Dalphino parochie Peruxie', 5–6 marzo 1526", *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi*, n. 186, giugno 2000, pp. 3–34, p. 24: ". . . Ad ipsius Alaxine domum accessit et ea comperta sibi dixit quod ille homo ad eandem ipsum loquentem mandaverat ut sibi demonstraret cameram ipsorum Bovilium in qua soliti erant stare barbe et magistri sette Valdensium, que Alaxina tunc sibi demonstravit ipsam domum ad quam accessit ipse loquens." Clot Meerii: p. 26; Rodoretto: p. 31.

[8] In fact the same suspect speaks equally of "the same house of the barbes in Bovile", *ibid.*, pp. 26, 28.

[9] E. Arnaud, *Mémoires historiques sur . . . les vaudois du Dauphiné*, Crest, 1896, p. 40.

the first case, since it is twenty-nine kilometres from La Saulce to Sisteron; it is fifty-two kilometres, however from Sisteron to Manosque, which would seem too much in a day. On the other hand, these are distances in today's terms, travelling via the main road, along the "nationale 85" which follows the valley of the Durance. Very probably, the travellers went cross-country, shortening their journey. We know from pilgrims' manuals, for example, that the distance covered daily was on average forty kilometres.

Just as the barbes chose the vicinity and the house where they would stay, it seems likely that they also chose the hour by which they would arrive at a Waldensian house. They awaited nightfall before knocking at the door of the house where they were expected. This much can be deduced from Pierre Griot's declaration, when asked by the inquisitor why it was that he had called at the house where he was arrested, an isolated dwelling, rather than heading on to the neighbouring village of Lourmarin; he replied that it was because it was night when he arrived.[10] Admittedly, this might amount to a question of expediency, but it is more likely to reflect a tactic whereby they were less likely to be noticed, which is borne out by several testimonies given by Waldensians from the Alps tried in 1487–1488. When Catherine, wife of Thomas Lantelme is asked "at which time do the barbes arrive?" she replies, "they come by night around the feast of Saint Michael;" later she adds, "they come and preach only by night." The same can be heard in the words of Lantelme Preyveral: "when the barbes come, they always come by night."[11] In other words, it was a precautionary measure taken almost systematically.

Pursuing further the means by which the barbes concealed their mission and their identity, it is interesting to consider the question of the itinerant preachers' appearance. Since they were to avoid attracting attention, how could they appear neither too wealthy nor too poor and thus fit in with the common mass of wayfarers? Examined in 1488, Pons Brunet, alias Amoux, from Freissinières, indicated that the Waldensian barbes "were dressed in rough cloth."[12] Peyronette,

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[10] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur, op. cit.*, p. 79: "Interrogé pourquoi se retira plutôt en la maison où il fut pris qu'à la ville de Lourmarin;—Dit que parce qu'il était nuit quand il arriva."

[11] Departmental archives, Isère, B 4350, ff° 117 v°, 165 and 285 v°.

[12] *Ibid.*, f° 82 v° (29 mars 1488); J. Chevalier, *Mémoire historique sur les Hérésies en Dauphiné avant le XVI^e^ siècle*, Valence, Jules Céas et fils, 1890, p. 146: « Dixit quod dicti barbe valdenses sunt laici et grosso panno induti. »

from Beauregard, already encountered above, admitted in 1494 that "twenty-five years ago already, two unknown men came to the house of Pierre Fournier, her late husband, dressed in clothes of grey."[13] As for Jean de Roma, he wrote as follows in 1533: "The said preachers travel through the lands dressed in very rough clothes like simple artisans."[14] The crux of the matter was exactly this: how could they both go unnoticed, yet still be recognised by their own people when needs be?

In 1488, François Bret from Freissinières declared that, on his return from Embrun, near Freissinières, he had recognised two Waldensian barbes dressed as if they were pilgrims. Had he known them previously, or did some sign enable him to recognise them?[15] A clearer indication is given by the barbe Martin, alias Francesco of Girundino, during his cross-examination in Oulx in 1492. He declared that, during his round in Provence with his fellow barbe André that same year, he met, near Aix-en-Provence, "three people claiming to be from the Dauphiné, who had recognised the barbes by their clothes, that is their coats."[16] This is most intriguing. The same coats, already mentioned, allowed the barbes both to go unnoticed and to be recognised by their followers.

Language too would appear to have helped identify them. Peyronette in her testimony to which we referred above, stated that the two men dressed in grey coats, whom she had seen in her husband's house, "seemed to her to be speaking in Italian or Lombard."[17] Some years previously, in April 1488, in the Alps this time, two men from Freissinières, Jean Anfoux and Paul Bérard, suspected of being Waldensians, were questioned separately along with hundreds of others and admitted to having met barbes, Simon and Louis in the first case, Simon, Martin and Etienne in the second. Both men underline the fact that "the said barbes spoke Piedmontese."[18] Even if

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[13] E. Arnaud, *Mémoires historiques sur . . ., op. cit.*, p. 36.

[14] National Archives, Paris, J 851, n. 2, f° 14: "Prefati predicatores ambulant per mundum in habitu multum vili prout et simplices mechanici."

[15] J. Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p. 149: "Respondit quod sunt tres anni elapsi quibus recedebat a loco Ebreduni apud Fraxineriam et recedendo reperit duos barbas valdensium dissimulatos in speciem peregrinorum."

[16] M. Benedetti, "L'interrogatorio dei barba Martino e Pietro (1492)", G. Tourn, *Il barba*, Torino, Claudiana, XVII Febbraio 2001, pp. 53–62, p. 58.

[17] E. Arnaud, *Mémoires historiques sur . . ., op. cit.*, p. 36.

[18] Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4351, ff° 246 v° and 277.

Piedmont is not far from Freissinières, this was a distinctive sign that attracted attention. Antoine Blaise from Angrogna, interrogated in 1486, declared that he had met two men while he was up in the pastures that he leased in Dauphin, a Provençal village near Sisteron, and he had recognised them as barbes because they spoke "in the idiom of Piedmont."[19] Being of Piedmont origin himself, but living in Provence, his attention had been caught by the language of his native land. Pierre Astoaud, from the town of Apt in Provence also recognised as a barbe the "man of Lombardy" who preached good words and whom he had encountered in 1532 at the home of Poncet Martin, a renowned Waldensian from the village of Roussillon. A woman, Gabrielle Caulier, also questioned by the inquisitor, had been there too; in her case, there can be no doubting the man's identity for she refers to him in Provençal as "lo barbo."[20] We are thus reminded of the foremost position of Piedmont in terms of the barbes' origins. It is equally possible that accent as much as language came into play when the Waldensians identified their barbes, bearing in mind, as we have already seen and shall be confirming later, that the *langue d'oc* in a number of varieties was the common language in the Waldensian community.

Were there other, more subtle or more specific signs whereby the barbes might be recognised, clearer, perhaps, or more mundane? It is highly likely, for the same is true of nearly all secret or clandestine societies. Concerning the Waldensians in general, and the barbes in particular, however, there is no other information on the matter. We can still acknowledge, however, that the barbes had established a whole art of dissimulation and recognition, so as to go unnoticed amidst hostile or unreliable populations and yet be identified by their flocks.

Gathering the Flock

When they had reached their destination and had rested and eaten, the barbes were ready to begin the ministry which had been conferred to them. The host family would have hurried to send out discreet invitations to the whole or part of the Waldensian community,

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[19] University Library, Cambridge, Dd 3, 25–38, G 6.

[20] Musée Arbaud, Aix-en-Provence, Ms Q 755, statements made on May 22, and May 25, 1532.

depending on its size. When Pierre Griot and his companion arrived in Tourettes, a Provençal hamlet near Apt, they called at the farmstead of Jean Tasquier. Tasquier in turn alerted his neighbour Antoine Bourgue. When the latter was summoned before the inquisitor, he gave the following account:

> Asked who came to seek him in his house,
> – Said that it was Bertrand or Barthélemy Tasquier.
> Asked what the messenger who came to seek him said,
> – Said he told him that the uncles had come.
> Asked what time it was,
> – Said it was by night.[21]

Thus was the news discreetly passed among them; it was by night, not using the proper term, "barbe" which might have alerted suspicious eavesdroppers, but its translation which the court clerk noted down in its French version, "uncle" [*oncle*] but which was most likely given in Provençal, "ouncle", admittedly very close to the French. An outsider might thus conclude that uncles, in the immediate sense of the term, members of the family, had just arrived. Later, after nightfall, the Waldensians gathered in the barbes' house of welcome. The reunion itself must have been of considerable import, taking place as it did at best once a year, and sometimes less, depending on circumstances. The conditions in which the meeting was held also impressed the participants. The Waldensians' lives and memories were marked by being thus gathered by night around the fireplace. Mention of the setting is made frequently in the depositions made by more than 225 (366) suspects questioned by Albert Cattaneo between 1487 and 1488. The wife of Philippe Pastre, from Pragelato, for instance, declared that: "When the barbes come, they give a sermon in their house, by the fireside, and they have all the Waldensian neighbours come together to hear the said sermon."[22] Thus night time and fire, darkness and light, not opposites in this case but allies, marked the imaginations of those present.

How many people gathered for these meetings? Very little information is available and what there is varies considerably. There is of course a link between the number of Waldensians present and the length of the stay. Philippe Rey, questioned in Piedmont in 1451, speaks

[21] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur, op. cit.*, p. 122.
[22] Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4350, f° 170 v°.

of meetings with fifty or sixty people present.[23] Indications given by Pierre Griot about his missionary round in the Luberon in the early 1530s can be revealing. He had been staying in the house where he was arrested by the inquisitor for some twelve days, but he claims to have been sick. Whatever the case, Lourmarin was a sizeable town, most of whose inhabitants were Waldensian; it was thus a site which doubtless required the barbes' presence over several days. He likewise stayed with his companion for a week in Cabrières-d'Avignon, an entirely Waldensian township in the Comtat Venaissin, preaching in several houses where "a great quantity of people from the village assembled." On the other hand, in places where the Waldensian presence was limited, so the duration of the stay was reduced, and they set off again far sooner. In Tourettes, a hamlet near the town of Apt, at the home of the Tasquier family, the reunion comprised only the household and Antoine Bourgue. In Oppédette, now in the department of the Alpes de Haute Provence, only three or four families met together. From there Pierre Griot and his older companion, the barbe Louis, went up to Saint-Quentin, another nearby hamlet, where all those from the area gathered, but even this probably did not amount to many. In Gignac, another village in the region, they preached in two houses and "there a large number from the region of Gignac gathered, so many that sometimes there were twenty people together, or more."[24] More often than not, going by Pierre Griot's deposition, there were ten to twenty people present at any one time. In such villages and hamlets, the preachers spent no more than one or two nights at the most. In effect, the smaller the locality, the more difficult it was to go unnoticed. The Waldensians, and more particularly the barbes, never lost sight of the need to keep hidden.

These nightly gatherings, by the fireside, were occasions of warmth and fraternity which fostered the sense of a shared but forbidden secret, and the communal awareness of peril. Once again, Pierre Griot's testimony is eloquent on this point. Towards the end of his trial, he spoke to the inquisitor in the following terms about the Waldensians:

> They have a secret between themselves, that is never to preach their doctrine other than before those who they know are from their sect.

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[23] W. Weitzecker, "Processo di un valdese nell'anno 1451", *Rivista Cristiana*, 1881, pp. 363–367, p. 366.

[24] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur, op. cit.*, pp. 76, 128, 123, 126–127.

> And so, when they preach in some house or other, there is always someone keeping watch; and if someone approaches who is not of their sect, they cease preaching.[25]

We should bear in mind that, in the eyes of the inquisitors, and the judges more generally, one feature distinguishing a suspect as a member of the Waldensian community, and thus a sign of heresy, was the fact of receiving the barbes in one's home. Traditionally it was one of the first questions put to suspects. It recurs, like a leitmotif, in the records of court proceedings. To admit to having met and listened to the barbes was already a factor held against the suspect. To admit to having received them at one's house was in itself grounds for conviction. No doubt the barbes were constantly aware of the mortal danger they were in and the risks their followers, their hosts most of all, took on their account. Thus under cover of darkness, with a vigil to keep watch, and protected too by the sense of warmth and solidarity as their community assembled about the hearth, the barbes were ready to fulfil their office. We can gauge well the depth of feeling linking preachers and flock, for it was together that they were in peril of their lives.

Preaching

As we have seen, the first and foremost task of the Poor of Lyons from the earliest days was to preach, to announce the Word of God in the vernacular. Once it had been entrusted to the Waldensian preachers, this mission remained uppermost from one century to the next. To this end, the barbes' apprenticeship required them to study certain books of the New Testament and to know them by heart; therein lay the reason for their learning to read. Hence the close association that grew up between the book, hand-written of course, and the barbe. Take Philippe Rey, for instance, interrogated in 1451 in Piedmont. When asked by the inquisitor how it was he knew that those he was denouncing were Waldensians, he replied that he had seen their names, as well as those of others whose names he had forgotten, inscribed in the book of barbes. There is no other mention of barbes possessing lists of Waldensians;[26] it must have been an

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 181.
[26] W. Weitzecker, *op. cit.*, p. 366: "Interrogatus quomodo, et qualiter scit, et per

exceptional case, and a highly imprudent one at that. What catches our attention here, however, is more specifically the link made between the barbe and the written word; similarly, the rural population of the times, completely illiterate for the most part, cannot fail to have been intrigued likewise.

During the hundreds of cross-examinations of Waldensian suspects in the Dauphiné Alps in 1487 and 1488, several made mention of the barbes' carrying books; the fact in itself was thus striking. Thomas Griot, from Pragelato, stated that "he saw a small book shown him by François Lambert, who told him it was a book of the Waldensian barbes." Similarly Pierre Griot, also from Pragelato, explained that "The barbes carried a book written in French which tells of their sect and, when they come to Waldensians' houses, they read from the book written in the vulgar tongue." We find Marguerite, too, wife of Pierre Lantelme of Sestrière, who recalls "the barbe Simon who carried books as if he were an ecclesiast." The association is revealing indeed; it implies that, in the eyes of the population of the day, a man bearing a book was most likely to be a member of the clergy. Even to this day we can hear echoes of learning and the clergy being assimilated, in such expressions as "être grand clerc en la matière" (literally, to be a great cleric in the subject) which means to be competent or knowledgeable in one particular field, the French word "clerc" meaning both to be learned and to be a member of the clergy. Without doubt, a book in itself impressed the local populations; it denoted the barbes' superior status. We are not faced with the odd preacher, here and there, walking around with a book, such as the barbe Simon; Jean Brense from Usseaux is adamant and crystal clear about the matter; in his experience, "The barbes always carry a book."[27]

If we now turn to another region, the Valence area which is still in the Dauphiné, admittedly, we find Peyronette, cross-examined in 1494, already cited above. She evokes two unknown men brought by her husband, saying, "After night came, once supper was over, one of them began to read from a small book that he carried with him, saying that, in this same book, were written the Scriptures and

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quos actus cognoscit praenominatos esse de dicta secta valdensium. Respondet, quod scit, et cognoscit eos ex eo quia vidit ipsos cum pluribus aliis de quorum nominibus non recordatur esse descriptos in libro dictorum barba."

[27] Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4350, respectively: Thomas Griot, f° 286; Pierre Griot, f° 153; Marguerite, f° 166 v°; Jean Brense, f° 300 v°.

the Commandments of the Law, which he wished to explain and make known in the presence of all those who were there."[28] In the same year, Monet Rey from Saint-Mamans, also in the diocese of Valence, spoke of two "good men" that Pascal Telmon had prompted him to meet: "One of these men, the older of the two, began to read from certain small books, that they carried with them, in which they affirmed the ten commandments of the law were written."[29]

In Piedmont, too, there would seem to be a similar close link between barbes and books, as the statement by Jacques Ressent in 1526 bears out. Describing the four meetings he had attended, he makes the association each time. "In Bovile, where was the said Jacques Ronchail, barbe and master of the said sect, who there read out the doctrine of the said sect once more." "Another time, in Bovile . . . while the above-names Antoine Gallet was reading", previously identified as "a barbe and master of the said sect." Still in Bovile, he was again with the same Jacques Ronchail, "while he read". And lastly in Clot Meerii, in the Saint Martin valley, he attended a meeting in 1525 where "Simon Martinat, barbe and master of the said Waldensian sect was reading."[30]

We now move on to Provence, and to Pierre Griot's version of the facts in 1532. Here again, his case is particularly revealing since, unlike the other testimonies which for the most part come from the followers, his story is that of a future barbe, the backbone of the community. The inquisitor, well aware of the barbe's privileged access to the written and spoken word, questions the suspect twice to know "if he has read a book to the said Jean Roux in his house" and, at the home of Dauphin family, "if he himself had read in the said house;" each time Griot replied that he had not. Later, "questioned as to whom the books belong and the bag which were found in the house where he was taken; Says that he does not know and it is not his."[31] Further into the trial, however, he goes back on his earlier statement, to give the following precisions:

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[28] E. Arnaud, *Mémoires historiques*, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

[29] J. Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p. 155: "Quo audito, dictus loquens accessit ad dictam domum, ubi reperit duos homines. Ipso ingresso cum eis, unus ipsorum hominum, scilicet antiquior, legere coepit quosdam parvos libros, quos secum deferebant . . ."

[30] G. Marini Nevache, "Verbale dell'interrogatorio di Iacopo Ressent di Bec Dauphin accusato di eresia", *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi*, n. 186, Giugno 2000, pp. 3–34, pp. 25–26.

[31] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur, op. cit.*, pp. 70 and 71.

> It is true that he has remembered since his last examination, when he was asked whose were the books which had been found in a small bag of white cloth, he said they were not his but he thinks they were those of a companion, whom he had met between La Saulce and Tallard, in the diocese of Gap, who is called Jeannet.[32]

We can thus establish that, at the time of his arrest in the farmstead near Lourmarin, a bag containing books was also discovered which Pierre Griot, hoping to exculpate himself, attributes to his travelling companion, who was in fact the barbe accompanying him. When the inquisitor asks him "whether the said Jeannet was not carrying books," he answers, "not that he knew or they were in the house."[33] Still further in his declaration, he returns once more to the issue, this time making the following declaration: "The books that were found in the house where he was taken were those of the said Jeannet."[34] Clearly the barbes were accustomed to taking books with them when they travelled. The three commissaries from the Parlement of Provence reporting back to the king in 1533 indeed confirm the matter. Drawing their conclusions from the documents provided by the inquisitor Jean de Roma, they specify that the barbes "have the scriptures which they learn and a few small books in French which contain their errors."[35]

If we now turn to G. Miolo, whose history of the Waldensians dates from the late sixteenth century, he writes that the barbes "worked daily translating the bible into the common language in which they preached, and they wrote them by hand themselves and then bound the books."[36] The author, who does tend to speak glowingly of the Waldensians in general and their barbes in particular, adopts a particularly optimistic tone here as he does elsewhere, and doubtless adorns the facts a little. We have seen that the barbes at large were far from being learned enough not only to relate but also to translate the Scriptures, which would require a good grounding in Latin. Certain barbes may indeed have been scholars, like Morel and Masson who went to consult the Reformers in 1530, but we know that most of them were merely able to read and knew noth-

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[32] *Ibid.*, p. 85.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 86: "(. . .) dit que non qu'il sache ou étaient en la maison."
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 107.
[35] National Archives, Paris, J 851, n. 2, f° 1484 v°.
[36] Gerolamo Miolo, *Historia breve & vera de gl'affari de i Valdesi delle Valli*, a cura di Enea Balmas, Torino, Claudiana, 1971, p. 103.

ing of Latin since the Morel report had to be translated by its author into *langue d'oc* for the preachers. Similarly, if certain books were indeed bound, most of those the barbes used for their preaching were doubtless not so, if only for practical reasons—weight, comfort and discretion—as they were carried around in secret.

What can we gauge from these various testimonies about the books? They were small, which fitted them to their use, almost paperbacks ahead of their times. As for their contents, we can establish that they were books from the Bible, the Gospel in particular, as well as the Ten Commandments, and more vaguely, books telling about "their sect." It is fortunate indeed that we have the means to be more specific, for a few copies of the barbes' little books escaped destruction. To put things more clearly, custom required that when a heretic was burnt, the writings he was carrying with him were likewise condemned to the flames. Added to this, the hazards of conservation across the centuries meant many more were lost. So today we are indeed "fortunate" to have a few copies available for consultation. We are thus able to compare testimonies with the actual books that have survived.

The Books

Over two hundred manuscripts, often grouped or even bound together, have been identified as "Waldensian" or linked to the Poor of Lyons and are conserved in about fifteen different libraries in Europe. Three collections are particularly rich: those in the libraries of Cambridge, Dublin and Geneva.[37] They enable us to know exactly what the books looked like. We shall focus on the Geneva Library collection, consisting of five manuscripts. Three are in paper, two in parchment; one has a cover, in parchment, which was the least expensive and so the more common. They are all small in size, ten to twelve centimetres from top to bottom and eight to fourteen centimetres wide. Each volume is composite, made up of several texts of different natures. The manuscript 206, for example, comprises five treatises (Vertuz, Pistola amicus or Pistoleta, Penas, Goy, Glosa Pater noster)

[37] Cambridge University Library, Ms Dd 15.29, 15.30, 15.31, 15.32, 15.33, 15.34; Dublin, Trinity College Library, Ms 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 267, 269; Geneva, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Ms 206, 207, 208, 209, 209a.

and fifteen sermons; in all it contains 123 folios. The number of folios varies from 100 to 170.

Edouard Montet was the first to undertake a systematic study of the entire collection in 1885, analysing the evolution that can be traced within the corpus.[38] The homogeneous quality of the corpus is striking: all the manuscripts come from the same region in the upper valleys in the Alps (Chisone and Luserna valleys), were written as far as can be ascertained between 1450 and 1520 and most of them are in Romance, a form of Provençal. A few are in Latin but nearly all of them are in a tongue and a script that appear deliberately archaic. In this way, a language form evolved for their religious celebrations and catechism. It nevertheless remained close to the spoken language, ensuring that it could be perfectly understood by all, which had always been the preachers' prime concern.

The Holy Scriptures, and the New Testament in particular, take pride of place in the books. We have already seen the fervour with which the Poor of Lyons read the Bible, memorizing passages so as to imitate the life of the apostles and thereby attain eternal salvation. It appears certain that biblical extracts represented the most frequently encountered texts carried by preachers, each one probably owning a copy or more. If this was truly the case, it implies that a considerable number of copies existed, only a few of which have survived to this day. In the five copies known to us, the New Testament is considered as a whole. In his study of the Provençal and Waldensian Bibles, Samuel Berger examined the five manuscripts. He even tried to establish their various origins.[39] The Old Testament, however, is never complete; the selected texts reveal the Barbes' particular religious sensibility. The Carpentras and Dublin bibles include Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus. The same orientation is reflected in the Cambridge and Grenoble bibles. Their liking for exemplary tales is clear in the choice of the sapiential books: Tobit, Job and 2 Maccabees. The little faithful flock, in constant fear of persecution, doubtless identified with the stories of a just man suffering for God.

Besides the canonical books, the Poor of Lyons added certain other, later books usually considered apocryphal or "deuterocanon-

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[38] E. Montet, *Histoire littéraire des vaudois du Piémont*, Paris, Fischbacher, 1885.

[39] S. Berger, "Les bibles provençales et vaudoises," *Romania*, XVIII, 1899, pp. 353–424.

ical" to which they seem particularly attached, such as Pastor Hermas, *La oracion de Manasesses* [The Prayer of Manasseh] and the book of Esdras, a copy of which belonged to Raymond of Costa, a fourteenth-century Waldensian. Their typically medieval predilection denotes a genuine concern to interiorise their religion. Such readings attest the importance the Poor of Lyons gave to penitence. *La oracion de Manasesses* is a devastating appeal for divine mercy, an expression of sincere repentance, a penitential prayer given as food for thought for every believer plunged into present vicissitudes but promised eternal beatitude. These sacred texts were further supplemented by books written by the Church Fathers. Evoking the Waldensian times, Etienne of Bourbon specified that, as well as certain biblical books, Vaudès had commissioned translations of the "authorities of the saints" which Bernard Gui identifies more clearly as "some maxims of St Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose and Gregory," in other words the four Fathers of the Latin Church whose dicta the Poor of Lyon called "sententiae." There are no patristic books amongst the surviving manuscripts, with the sole exception of one in Cambridge entitled "Sententiae of St Gregory."[40] Various references and allusions recurring throughout the treatises are a fair indication that readings and meditation based on the traditional writings of Latin Christianity were maintained in the Barbes' community.

The corpus is not just made up of Holy Scriptures, the apocrypha and the Church Fathers. It would be excessive to analyse each one here or even to list them. Identifying the various types and situating the principal themes will suffice to give us an idea of the sort of pious literature the Waldensians produced. In truth, we are not dealing so much with an original literature in terms of its contents as with re-readings of classical works, a selection from the mass available to them or a different approach to such texts denoting their particular sensibility. This sensibility, which can be traced in all the manuscripts, derives from the ideal cherished by the Waldensians from the earliest days of their movement: the desire to live in accordance with the evangelical model and to meditate on the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), a central text in the Waldensians' reflections, rather than debating doctrinal speculations. Their line of thought was moral rather than dogmatic, practical rather than speculative. Their approach was characterised above all by its pastoral inclination.

[40] Cambridge University Library, Dd 15. 33, f° 59–60 v°.

This tendency was expressed in several forms which we might refer to as "literary genres." Eight poems, made up of more than 2200 lines, were composed between the late fourteenth and the early sixteenth century. Fine examples of this production are *Lo Payre eternal*, *La Barca*, *Lo Novel Confort* and *Lo Novel Sermon*. All these writings reflect the Waldensians' religious world, but the most famous and probably the most frequently read in the community, appearing as it does in five manuscripts, was doubtless the *Nobla Leyczon*. This poem focuses on the persecution of the faithful flock and its masters, describing how the bad shepherds oppressed them. The most constant themes of the Waldensians' experience as a dissent can be found here:

> But I dare to say, for it happens to be true,
> That all the popes there have been since Sylvester until the present one,
> And all the cardinals, and all the bishops, and all the abbots,
> All these together do not have enough power
> To be able to forgive a single mortal sin.
> God alone can forgive, since no one else can do so.

Another example, eloquently summarising the Waldensian sensibility, runs as follows:

> If there are some who love and fear Jesus Christ,
> Who wish not to malign others, nor to take oaths, nor to lie,
> Nor commit adultery, nor kill, nor steal from another,
> Nor seek vengeance on his enemies,
> They say he is a Waldensian and worthy of punishment.[41]

The *Nobla Leyczon* is thus a meditation on the destiny of mankind since the fall. He who is called for salvation operates of his own free

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[41] A. Monastier, *Histoire de l'Église vaudoise* . . ., Paris, Delay & Toulouse Tartanac, 1847, 2 v., v. 2, pp. 245–269:

> "Ma yo auso dire, car se troba en ver,
> Que tuit li papa que foron se Silvestre entro e, aquest,
> E tuit li cardinal et tuit li vesque et tuit li aba,
> Tuit aquisti ensemp non han tan de potesta
> Que ilh poissan perdonar un sol pecca mortal." (p. 266, verses 408–413);

> "Que si n'i a alcun bon que ame et tema Yeshu Xrist,
> Que non volha maudire ni jurar ni mentir,
> Ni avoutrar ni aucir ni penre de l'altruy,
> Ni venjar se de liseo enemis,
> Ilh dion qu'es Vaudes e degne de punir." (p. 264, verses 368–372).

Reed: C. Papini, *La nobile lezione. La nobla leiçon. Poemetto medievale valdese*, Torino, Claudiana, 2003; original text and translation into Italian. In this edition, the passages quoted above correspond to verses 418–424 and 376–380.

will; it is up to him to answer the call addressed to him. But time is short, and the end of the world is drawing near. In this dramatic, sometimes apocalyptic atmosphere where desperate anguish alternates with fervent hope, everyone has a mission to fill in the place accorded to them in the community: the pastors must pray and announce the Word; the faithful must repent and be converted. All these poems express a passionate devotion to the Holy Scriptures, particularly favouring readings from Matthew and John and evangelical passages to which they were especially partial: the Sermon on the Mount, the parables and the announcement of the Day of Judgement.

The sermons make up another group in which the same themes recur, the most frequent of which being the call to repent and be converted. They are not intended to teach matters of catechism or theology which are studied elsewhere, but to inspire their listeners in view of their salvation. The manuscript *Parolla de Dio* [Word of God) draws on Matthew 13: 3 ("Behold a sower went forth to sow"] to develop a line of reflection on penitence based on the Gospels.[42] The "Bestiary" (*De la propiota de las animanczas*) is more original, at least from our point of view, taking as it does a list of animals, whose way of life and whose image according to the mentality of the times provide the basis for a series of moral lessons.[43] The dog, the pig and the lion serve as examples, but it is the eagle that epitomises the process of repentance. It flies towards the sun and burns its wings and eyes, goes to rub its beak down on stone and then dives into a fountain of fresh water. Thus can a sinner be rejuvenated in the spiritual well of penitence, after a period of redemption: first comes contrition (the eye) when the believer regrets the evil he or she has done; then confession (the beak), when sins are recognised and admitted; finally satisfaction when sins have been expiated. These are three of the four stages in the sacramental rite. The sermon on Matthew 12: 36–37 emphasizes the urgent nature of repentance, warning against idle words which will have to be accounted for on the day of judgement: "Cry while you still have time, while your soul is with your body . . . While you live, acquire the remedy for the future . . . before you are engulfed by the depths." Each sermon thus offers a commentary on the Gospel.

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[42] Cambridge, University Library, Dd 15.29, f° 90 v°–95 v°.

[43] A.-M. Raugei, *Bestiario valdese*, Firenze, Olschki, 1998; p. 165: "De l'aygla" [On the eagle].

The treatises, intended as works giving moral guidance, voice the same pastoral choices as the sermons. Here again, the Poor of Lyons retain their specificity, seeking to make Christian life in their era conform to that in the first communities in apostolic times. Both *Doctor* and *Las Tribulacions* for example renew the call to be converted and exhort penitence.[44] *Somme le Roy* tackles the often delicate issues of marriage and the family, the latter being a fundamental unit in the society of the time, on a social level as much as on a religious level, for it ensured the survival and the transmission of the dissent.[45] The first treatise presents their tribulations as the just wages of sin and as a beneficial opportunity for believers to examine their consciences; the second treatise on tribulations invites them to endure their persecutions with patience in imitation of Christ; in this way the believers will partake in the Saviour's Passion. It urges them to have courage while their torment lasts. In the Cambridge manuscript this treatise is followed with the Book of Job, the perfect example of the just man's suffering, with Tobit, the image of patience when put to the test, and unshakeable hope, and with Maccabees in which the Seven Brothers personify the heroism of the martyrs. It is clear that the treatise appeals directly to the community of suffering believers, exhorting them to bear up, for nothing is in vain. On the contrary, their earthly tribulations will be rewarded with eternity.

What might be called the group of letters is a more limited source. It consists of epistles sent by the community's leaders to the Brothers. Here too emphasis is laid on the suffering endured by the Poor of Lyons. It is made very clear, however, that, to the authors' mind, it is a test which God has willed as a sign that they have been chosen by God and are loved by him; it also binds the community. The most revealing document in this respect is the letter from Barthélemy Tertian written probably between 1460 and 1500; he is one of the barbes whose surname we know, already encountered above. His letter is an exhortation addressed to the diaspora of believers, rather than to each member individually. It unites the elected people who are to be saved in a vision that does away with the question of his-

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[44] Cambridge, University Library, "Doctor": Dd 15.30, f° 39v°–48 v°; "Las Tribulacions": Dd 15.31, f° 33–55.

[45] Cambridge University Library, Dd 15. 30. See A. Brenon, "The Waldensian Books", P. Biller & A. Hudson ed., *Heresy and literacy, 1000–1530*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 137–159; Somme le Roi: pp. 152–156.

tory; the Church of the apostles and the present community of farm labourers, shepherds and craftsmen are brought together beneath the eyes of God in the hope of eternal salvation. In all, the poems, sermons, treatises and epistles that were in secret circulation within the Romance group of the Poor of Lyons constitute a remarkable ensemble. Its homogeneity is first external, as we have seen, in terms of the date, the geographical origins and language used. It is also internal, bearing in mind the references, quotations, recurring themes, selected readings and pastoral choices which are expressed. The Barbes' library thus appears original; it cannot be confused either with traditional pious literature, notwithstanding frequent borrowings from this domain, or with works by other dissenting groups, although here too there are clearly identifiable influences.

Such is the documentation available concerning the little books the barbes carried with them and from which they drew both their own spiritual nourishment and the substance of the sermons they would address to those gathered around them. While this gives us a relatively good idea of the type of works they produced and used, we know next to nothing about the form their meetings took. Did they observe a ritual? All we know is that the barbes, always in twos, took it in turns to speak, with the older man speaking first and then his younger companion. We can suppose that they began by reciting passages from the Scriptures, either by memory or reading aloud. Pierre Griot acknowledged that "It is true that he has read the New Testament, which he read out sometimes in the places where he went." His companion for one season, the former Dominican turned barbe, the hosier from Avignon called Antoine Guérin, did likewise: "The said Guérin read the Scriptures in the said house, and explained them." There may well have been other readings, taken from the sort of books examined above. Then the key themes were discussed. When the inquisitor asked Griot what he preached and told the people, he answered, "that he told them what he found written down." In other words, there was a sermon commenting on or explaining the texts."[46]

When the Waldensians were brought to trial and cross-examined, they often came during their confessions to evoke the barbes' activities during the nightly meetings; here, the terms which recur most often,

[46] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur, op. cit.*, p. 72.

and which we have already encountered above, are "sermon", "preaching", "reading". Such mentions bespeak the authority which the Waldensians bestowed on their preachers, acknowledging them to be men of the Word and the Scriptures, and not just men whose mission gave them mastery over the written and spoken word.

Finally, a few words about the question of language and language use, for it was crucial both in terms of the success of their missions and as a token of their originality. We have already touched on the matter when considering statements made by the Waldensians and by their prosecutors. The barbes spoke "Lombard" or "Piedmontese"; their writings are in "French" or "the vulgar tongue", a term used at the time to designate any language outside Latin; this is borne out by the barbes' books that have survived to this day. Here we find confirmation of the Waldensians' original impetus, seeking as they did not only to preach in the vernacular, for the Roman clergy did this too, but also to announce the Word of God in the language of the people; this was original, as well as dangerous, for the authorities viewed it with suspicion. The fact that most of the barbes' books are written in *langue d'oc* also reveals its widespread usage: from Provence, the eastern side at least, as far as the south of Italy it was spoken or at least understood, whatever the varieties and local variations.

Confessing

There was a second role conferred upon the barbes, besides their preaching but just as widespread, which historians have often tended to play down if not to ignore: confession, a constituent element of their mission. The very fact that they conserved the sacrament of penance makes the Waldensians a case in themselves amongst medieval religious dissents.[47] In point of fact, the practice of confession is largely attested in the trials from the fifteenth to sixteenth century. Even before this era, in the Germanic wing, the preachers, whom the Waldensians habitually called *die Brüder* [Brothers], were also known as *die Beichtiger* [Confessors].

In the Alps, there emerges during the proceedings launched in 1487–1488 against the Dauphiné Waldensians a very clear trend confirming

[47] See G. Audisio, "Une hérésie 'différente': les vaudois", in *Homo religiosus, autour de Jean Delumeau*, Paris, Fayard, 1997, pp. 327–335.

that one of the most obvious signs of belonging to the Waldensian community was confessing to a barbe. Hence the question systematically put to all suspects by the inquisitor. We find that of the 366 suspects examined by the tribunal, 311 admit to having confessed to a barbe, which makes 84.5%. Examples crop up time and time again, of one suspect who has been confessing for twenty-seven years to the preachers, another for thirty-six years, two more for forty years and one for as long as forty-seven years. In most cases, confession has taken place several times, averaging out at once every two years. This is probably very close to what their fellow Roman Catholics were doing, despite the fourth Lateran Council's ruling that confession should be annual. Whatever the case, confession would appear to be a very minor feature in the Waldensians' everyday lives, going by an inhabitant of Freissinières, Facy Raymond's admission that he had only confessed twice. The examining magistrate questioned him thus: "Why, bearing in mind that he was forty years old, had he not confessed more often to the barbes." To which he received the following answer, a revealing one indeed: "Because when he was ten years old, his father died and immediately after he left Freissinières and went into the service of the masters and he stayed there and served a long time." The facts of the matter are clear: he had not confessed more often since he had been out of the country.[48]

The same sources tell us the approximate age of nearly all the suspects, via the inquisitor's question about when they first confessed to a barbe. We find that first confession amounted to a form of rite marking the entrance into the sect, an explicit sign that the individual adhered of his own free will to the dissenting community. Nineteen suspects link their first confession directly to their "entrance into the sect", which is more often than not at around the age of twelve to fourteen. Might we not consider the event both as a religious rite marking the passage from childhood to adulthood as well as the expression of a reflective personal decision to enter the dissent?[49]

Confession to barbes is likewise attested in Provence. Amongst those who went of their own accord to make depositions when the inquisitor Jean de Roma was in Apt in the spring of 1532, we find Anne David, wife of Pierre Violet, from Apt. When she had been

[48] Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4351, f° 128, 1st April 1488.
[49] Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4350, B 4351.

in Saint-Martin-de-la-Braque, i.e. on the other side of the Luberon, on the south-facing flank, she heard a serving girl from a house in Cabrières-d'Aigues tell how an important man called "the barbe" came to them three times a year and "he heard the confessions of the people of the house in the storeroom."[50]

While most testimonies attesting the practice of confession in the community are made by the Waldensian people themselves, there are other sources too. The barbes Martin and Pierre, cross-examined in Oulx in 1492, equally admit to having heard the confessions of their followers. The former asserts that "if those of Pragelato had wished to confess, he would have heard them." His statement continues as follows:

> Asked, when he heard the confessions of someone, how he absolved him, he says and answers that they do not do it in the manner of priests, but they tell them to uphold their sect firmly and they add that they sometimes repeat as penance the Lord's Prayer but not Ave Maria, they do not impose pilgrimages but only alms for the love of God.

As for his companion, the barbe Pierre, arrested at the same time and questioned in exactly the same way, he replied, "That they do not give absolution in the manner of priests but they enjoin them to uphold their sect and to keep a solid faith in it and to say in penance Our Father . . ., not Ave Maria."[51] In this case, we have confessors explaining their activity, making the statement all the more significant.

As far as the inquisitors and more generally the tribunals questioning suspects were concerned, confessing to barbes, like taking the barbes into one's home, was a clear sign of belonging to the Waldensian community. The followers in this case were of the same opinion. The interrogatory of Jean Didier from Usseaux is a case in point. Questioned on February 15, 1488 as to whether his wife was in the sect, he answered, "He does not know whether she has ever confessed to a barbe since she has lived in his house," meaning since their marriage. He thus makes it clear that to confess to a barbe means to be a Waldensian, and vice versa no doubt as well.[52]

Have we any more precise information concerning the words and gestures that the rite entailed? There are two testimonies from the

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[50] Musée Arbaud, Aix-en-Provence, Ms Q 755, f°18, May 23, 1532.

[51] M. Benedetti, "L'interrogatorio dei barba Martino e Pietro (1492)", *op. cit.*, pp. 59 and 62.

[52] Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4350, f° 306.

Valentinois, in Dauphiné, both dating from 1494, which describe the rite of penance. First Monet Rey, from Saint-Mamans, who explains, "After the sermon was over, the one who preached withdrew into a chamber telling him that he should come to him to confess . . . which he did, and he confessed to him on his knees. Then, at the end of his confession, he gave him absolution in the manner of priests, laying his hand on his head." He moreover commanded him to say the Lord's Prayer as many times as he could by way of penance, and to give alms, as far as his means permitted.[53] A second testimony comes from the inhabitant of Beauregard already evoked above. Peyronette admitted to having confessed each time a barbe came, the first time twenty-five years previously, and about a dozen times in all since then. She depicts the ceremony as follows:

> Each time these preachers were in the house of her late husband she had confessed her sins to one of them, on bended knee as if she had been before the proper priest, and, once confession was over, he gave her absolution by laying his hand on her head in the manner of the priests. Questioned as to the penance the said preachers or masters imposed for the sins she had confessed, she says and replies that she had often to say Pater Noster, as many times as she could, and then to fast on certain Fridays and to give alms according to her means.[54]

As far as the question of absolution is concerned, one formula is recorded, possibly one of several used, in a manuscript from Strasbourg dating from 1404. It was already quoted above in reference to the eastern Brothers, but merits our attention again:

> May Our Lord who forgave Zacheus, Mary Magdalene and Paul, who delivered Peter from his chains and Martha and the other repentant sinners, be willing to forgive you your sins. May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord show himself to you and have pity on you. And may the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your heart and your spirit in Jesus Christ. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit bless you. Amen.[55]

As can be seen, the formula is substantially different to that used in the Roman Catholic rite. Instead of the priest saying, "I absolve you"

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[53] J. Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

[54] E. Arnaud, *Mémoires historiques sur . . ., op. cit.* p. 37.

[55] Manuscript destroyed by fire in Strasbourg on August 23–24, 1870, published par C. Schmidt in 1852; republished and translated from German into French by E. Montet, *Histoire littéraire des vaudois du Piémont, op. cit.*, pp. 143–144.

[*ego te absolvo*], the barbe merely says, "May God forgive you." This does not make the forgiveness of sins any less real. The Waldensians were practising confession in the full sense of the rite; of this there can be no doubt. Should further proof still be required, we have only to turn once more to the Morel report. The barbe drawing up his missive himself admits that confession exists, a difficult admission to make considering that the reformers he was addressing dismissed the sacrament of penance as mere superstition. He specifically states: "Once a year we visit our people . . . and in secret we hear their individual confessions."[56]

Is it possible to know quite what meaning and what precise value the Waldensians attributed to the rites of penance, bearing in mind that the acting out of the ritual says little about what it is deemed to signify? The same gesture can be interpreted in a number of different ways. What for one may be a piece of advice, for another may be guidelines for the conscience, for another an act of piety, and for a fourth a sacrament in the fullest sense of the term. The spectrum of values would seem broad indeed. What did the Waldensians themselves think?

Morel, in his report, gives the following definition: "We believe auricular confession of sins to be useful, without prescribing a particular time for it, so as merely to offer the infirm and the ignorant, and those who seek it advice, consolation and help in keeping with the teaching in the Holy Scriptures." This would imply that as far as the author, himself a barbe, is concerned, confession as it was practised within the Waldensian community amounted to a form of advice given to the believers. Were the flocks of the same opinion?

As we have seen above, there are a great many testimonies concerning confessions from the Waldensians themselves, foremost among whom those from the Dauphiné in the late fifteenth century. Two coinciding elements vouch for the credibility of these declarations. First, their convergence, although they were given in varying and distant times and places, thus confirming in our minds that they were given independently. Second, the conditions in which these declarations were made. In each case, the speaker is suspected of Waldensian heresy. Whether the suspects were answering a question put by the inquisitor specifically concerning confession, or whether they were speaking spontaneously, either way it would have been in their interest to deny the practice which they knew perfectly well to be heterodox

[56] V. Vinay, *Le confessionni di fede . . ., op. cit.*, pp. 42–43.

outside the Church of Rome. That in these circumstances the suspects should still have maintained that they confessed to the barbes can only plead in favour of the testimonies being reliable. In which case, what exactly did the suspects have to say?

Going by the records of court proceedings, there can be no doubting the fact that the faithful believed they were being forgiven in the full sense of the term. Several suspects interrogated in the Dauphiné in 1487–88 declared that "the barbes have the power to give and withhold absolution." Thomas Guiot from Pragelato in the Alps, examined in 1495, affirmed that the barbes had assured him they had the power to absolve him, and he had indeed believed they had that power." As for Pierre Griot, equally from Pragelato, questioned in 1487, he states that, "In the present year he confessed to the barbe Jacques Roux in his house, in July or thereabouts, kneeling down, bare-headed, and he had believed he was absolved."[57] Similarly Jean Anthoard from Freissinières on March 29, 1488, declares that, "Three years ago, he was coming from Champcella to his house in Pallon, when he met two Waldensian barbes who preached their law to him and enjoined him to confess. Their clothes were of rough cloth, and he took them into his house that evening and fed them and received absolution, bare-headed and on his knees, and he believed he was absolved."[58]

Not only did the Waldensians practise confession, truly believing their sins could be absolved by the barbes, but they sometimes set forth a full justification of their belief. In 1487 Jean Juvenal from Mentoulles said of the barbes: "Their sect is better because they lead the life of the Apostles and follow the life of Christ and of poverty and they have full power to give and withhold absolution." In the same year, his compatriot Jean Fabre gave a precise indication of the causal relationship between lifestyle and the spiritual power thus granted: "The barbes have the power to give and withhold absolution because they lead apostolic lives, and not the priests of the Roman Church whose lives are too lax."[59] Monet Rey, whom we have already

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[57] Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4350 and B 4351; for example: Jean Lantelme, of Pragelato, November 17, 1487, f° 130. Thomas Guiot: Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Ms fr. 17811, f° 61; Pierre Griot: Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4350, f° 103 and 153.

[58] *Ibid.*, B 4351, f° 90 v°.

[59] Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4350: Jean Juvenal, f° 185; Jean Fabre, f° 179 v°.

cited, spoke of ecclesiasts in the following terms: "Because they lead bad lives, they have no more power to absolve than the preachers or masters of this sect do. These latter, albeit laymen, have the same power as priests or ecclesiasts."[60] Taking into account the number and diversity of testimonies on the matter, we can but conclude that the belief was generally accepted by the Waldensians. They confessed to barbes, believed they were truly pardoned and in some instances could justify what they believed.

After absolution, the barbes gave acts of penance which their believers had to fulfil. Most frequently, it would appear they imposed the Lord's Prayer to be recited a number of times. Gabriel Roman from Freissinières, aged about 50, admitted he had confessed six times to the barbes, and in penance, he had had "to say the Lord's Prayer and Ave Maria every morning, kneeling down, bare-headed."[61] Jean Michel from Freissinières, aged 30, stated that he had entered the sect fifteen years previously by confessing, and had since then confessed six or seven times to the barbes; for the last feast of Mary Magdalene, in other words July 22, he had confessed to the barbe Etienne who told him as penance to recite Pater Noster ten times, on his knees, with his head bare.[62] The two Waldensians from Valentinois cross-examined in 1494, gave a fuller account. First, Monet Rey, from Saint-Mamans:

> Once confession is over, he gave him absolution in the manner of priests by laying his hand on his head. Asked about the nature of the penance the said preacher imposed, he said and replied that he ordered him to say the Pater Noster a great many times, as many as he could, and to give alms according to his means.

As we saw above, Peyronette from Beauregard answers the question in practically the same terms:

> Asked if ever she has confessed her sins to one from the said preachers or masters: she says and replies that, each time these same preachers were in the house of her late husband, she had confessed her sins to one of them, on bended knee, as if she were before the proper priest, and then, once confession was over, he gave her absolution by laying his hand on her head in the manner of priests.

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[60] J. Chevalier, *Mémoire historique . . ., op. cit.*, p. 156.
[61] *Ibid.*, B 4351, f° 95 v°, April 2, 1488.
[62] *Ibid.*, B 4351, f° 116 v°, March 21, 1488.

> Questioned as to the penance the said preachers or masters imposed for the sins she had confessed: she says and replies that she had often to say Pater Noster, as many times as she could, then to fast on certain Fridays and to give alms according to her means.[63]

In other words, confession as practised by the Waldensians entailed the four constitutive elements of the sacrament of penance as defined by Catholic theology: the acknowledgement or confession itself, contrition as expressed by the act of acknowledgement, the absolution of sins and finally reparation or satisfaction as symbolised by the penance imposed.

In exchange, the penitents gave the barbes a few coins, as Monet Rey did for example, a contribution given for the barbe's ministration, a form of "perquisite" in return for the rite being accomplished and succour being given. When asked by the inquisitor in 1495 if he gave the barbes anything for his confession, Thomas Guiot from Pragelato relied that he gave "a quarter."[64] In the minds of the believers, it was probably not the sacrament itself they were paying for—this was simony, which provoked the ire of the Church Reformers—but rather an offering in return for the ministration.

Finally, when confession was over, the barbes gave needles to the penitent. This is a detail most scholars have ignored. There is no escaping the fact, however, that it is mentioned in a number of depositions or testimonies, all perfectly independent from one another and often separate in terms of time as well as space. During the huge crusade launched in 1487–1488 in the Dauphiné, several suspects referred to the practice, which may well strike one as curious, to say the least. Facius Bonet, from Mentoulles, declared on October 1, 1487 that "the barbes had given him several needles." Catherine, wife of Thomas Lantelme, from the Chisone valley, stated that "When the barbes come they give needles and when she confessed, she always received something, be it big or small." Marguerite, wife of Pierre Lantelme too reveals in November 1487, that "She confessed sixteen years ago in her father's house and in her home, in July, to the barbe Simon who carried a book as if he were an ecclesiast; and he gave her needles when she had confessed to him."[65] In 1489,

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[63] E. Arnaud, *Mémoires historiques sur . . ., op. cit.*: Monet Rey, p. 30; Peyronette, p. 40.

[64] Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms fr. 17811, f° 56 v°.

[65] Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4350, f° 78 v°, f° 117 v°, and f° 166 v°.

the inquisitor François Plouvier operating in Embrun questioned Pierre Crespin alias Valoy, from Saint-André. Amongst other declarations which finally led to his condemnation, the suspect declared that he had confessed when he was 14 years of age, probably for the first time, to a barbe who gave him "two needles to play with the way children do."[66] In the Valentinois, some three hundred kilometres from there, and seven years later, the fact is confirmed by Monet Rey. "Asked about what he gave the said confessors or preachers, says and replies that he sometimes gave them two or three *gros* and that the preachers or confessors sometimes gave him a quantity of needles."[67] And finally, in Provence, we find Anne Violet, to whom we referred earlier, completing her "revelation" to the inquisitor in 1532 by saying: "A great man came who was called the barbe. And he came three times a year and he heard the confessions of the people in the house in a storeroom . . . And the said barbe gave a needle to each of those whose confessions he had heard."[68]

What explanation can be given for thus giving needles rather than any other object? It could be a reflection of a simple need of the day. Metal, as we know, was precious indeed. Metal objects, utensils and tools, were often what the peasants lacked, whatever their talents as craftsmen, however much they needed to forge or repair their wares during those long winter's evenings. They were frequently reduced to borrowing or buying them. Pins and needles, which could not be made at home, were rare, precious objects often brought by pedlars. In this case, the barbes would have been providing much-appreciated help. On the other hand, the needles may have had another meaning, both symbolic and practical. Ethnologists have long since drawn attention to two symbolical connotations of needles in traditional societies: first, a quite straightforward sexual connotation, but also an initiatory dimension marking rites of passage.[69] The *Littré* Dictionary still makes the following mention: "pin—something added

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[66] J. Marx, *L'Inquisition en Dauphiné*, Paris, Champion, 1914; Marseille, Laffitte Reprints, 1978, p. 249: "Dictus barba sibi dedit duas acus ad ludendum more juvenum."

[67] E. Arnaud, *Mémoires historiques sur . . ., op. cit.*, pp. 30–31.

[68] Musée Arbaud, Aix-en-Provence, Ms Q 755, f° 18, May 23, 1532.

[69] A. Van Gennep, *Manuel de folklore contemporain*, Paris, 4 t, 9 v., 1937–1958, t. 1, v. 1, p. 242; M. Soriano, *Les contes de Perrault, cultures savantes et traditions populaires*, Paris, 1968, reed. 1977, pp. 156–157; B. Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*, New York, 1976; Y. Verdier, *Façons de dire, façons de faire. La laveuse, le couturière, la cuisinière*, Paris, 1979; *Id.*, "Le petit chaperon rouge dans la tradition orale", *Le Débat*, 1980, n. 3, pp. 31–61.

to a given sum," in other words a tip or surplus.[70] Which would suggest the barbes perhaps ministered and gave a little extra something too. We can go still further. Needles appear to have played a particular role in the Waldensian community. When in 1486 the archbishop of Embrun asked Antoine Blaise of Angrogna in Piedmont how he had known that the two men he saw arriving were barbes when he was out tending his sheep near Sisteron, the shepherd replied, as we saw above, that he recognised them by the Piedmont dialect they spoke and by the little book one of them showed him. He went on to say that it was also by a "square needlecase" they revealed to him.[71] The discreet object may well have represented a form of sign which, together with certain others, enabled the barbes to be identified. As we saw above, amongst the objects Miolo cites as being made by the barbes, alongside wooden spoons and purses, there figured "women's needlecases."[72] Another connotation may well have been implied, linking back to the extract from the Scriptures which the Waldensians cherished particularly: "And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew: 19, 24). From this angle, receiving needles from a barbe has complex and composite meaning.

If this is indeed the case, how can we understand the position adopted by Morel in his report written in 1530, in which he stipulates that confession amounts only to giving advice? One answer would be to suggest that this was the position defended by the barbes, while their followers, imbued as they were with Catholic customs, had misconceived their preachers' official stance. I am not convinced by such an explanation. First, several followers clearly assert that the barbes themselves had taught them they had the power to forgive sins for reasons seen above. Second, Morel himself admits his uneasiness, in an admission coming just before the passage concerning confession; here he states that "In this . . . we have erred, believing in more than two sacraments."[73] Baptism was not an issue; the second sacrament may have been the Eucharist, which was itself often put into question. What could the third sacrament have been, if not confession, which

[70] É. Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, Paris, 1863, frequently reprinted.
[71] Cambridge, University Library, Ms Dd 3. 25–38, G 6 et Ms 266 (C 1.6).
[72] G. Miolo, *Historia breve*, *op. cit.*, p. 102: "come a far cucchari di legno, e far delle borse et aguchiari di donne." (. . . such as making wooden spoons, and making women's purses and needle-cases).
[73] V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede . . .*, *op. cit.*, pp. 40–41.

is so frequently evoked? This suggests that even as he solemnly denied it, Morel was also admitting that the Waldensians did believe in the sacrament of penance. Without being firmly convinced on the matter, it is highly likely that the Waldensians, most of them at least, took the penitential rite they practised as a sacrament in the full sense of the term. If this is indeed the case, then in this instance the Waldensians really did represent a united community, for as we have seen, the practice of confession and the belief in the effectiveness of absolution given by the preachers were shared by all, from one side of Europe to the other, from the east right across to the west.

What remains to be seen is why of all the different Christian movements dissenting from the Church of Rome, the Waldensians alone maintained confession, which was more often deemed a superstition, a whim of the clergy invented to extend and impose their power. The question is all the more pertinent, if we consider that from the earliest days, the Waldensians wished to respect the Holy Scriptures to the letter, and yet nowhere in the New Testament is there any trace of the practice. The answer doubtless lies in the fact that, discounting the incontestably humiliating, demeaning aspect of having to admit faults, there is also a comforting side to confession, and psychological relief in the fact of being able to go away safe in the knowledge that forgiveness has been granted.[74] Is it not from the therapeutic value of avowal and forgiveness that stems the welter of professions offering psychological aid in today's societies? It is noteworthy indeed that these have proliferated above all in countries either where Protestantism long had a stronghold, or where Catholicism has gradually lost its sway. Surprising as it may seem, the Waldensians, doubtless spontaneous and pragmatic in their choices in this case as elsewhere, rather than calculating and deliberate, maintained the sacrament of penance.

Before bringing this chapter devoted to the barbes' mission to a close, a brief word must be said about one feature, which has already been evoked concerning the Brothers in the east, and which was just as firmly established amongst the preachers in the west: their itinerancy. While there is little point insisting too long on the issue, it would be a mistake to overlook it altogether, for it defined the men's lives. When the fair season returned each year, these wayfarers for God set off on their travels. They covered considerable distances, particularly

[74] See in particular J. Delumeau, *L'aveu et le pardon*, Paris, Fayard, 1990.

when the region which they were entrusted with comprised only small communities or even single families, separated one from the other. We know little about their missionary rounds. We can, however, work out the duration of their travels from two barbes, Martin and Pierre, interrogated in 1492. One year before, Martin and another companion had come to France via Mont Cenis and visited the provinces of Bourbonnais, Rouergue, Forez, Auvergne, Limousin and Bordelais. The following year he set off with the barbe Jean. He fell ill and had to remain in Italy. Jean went on alone through Genoa, Nice and Provence to visit Vivarais, Auvergne, Velay, Beaujolais, Chambéry in Savoy, Gap and the Dauphiné. Meanwhile, Martin recovered and set off with André d'Anani via Genoa, Nice and Aix-en-Provence; they crossed Vivarais, Auvergne and Beaujolais and finally reached Lyons where the two companions met six other barbes.

Martin and Pierre set off again as a preaching pair as they had before to Velay, Auvergne, Forez and Beaujolais. They went through Lyons again before travelling to Bresse, Geneva, Annecy, Conflans, the outskirts of Albertville, Aiguebelle, La Chambre, Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne, Valloire in Savoy, Névache, Bardonnèche, Savoulx and finally Oulx where they were arrested. It had not been intended as their final stop. They had planned to go to the valleys of Chisone, Saint Martin and Luserna and return westwards to Freissinières, L'Argentière and Vallouise before going to Lombardy where they had arranged to meet two other barbes. This gives us an idea of the hundreds if not thousands of kilometres covered by these religious vagabonds during the course of a season's preaching. The area attributed to the preachers was not always so vast. It must have varied considerably according to the density of believers living in any one place. Whatever the case, the annual meeting, generally in Piedmont, made the length of a missionary circuit even greater.

Thus we can retrace the clandestine mission of the barbes who gathered their flocks, read to them, preached and heard their confessions and who, in return were helped, financed and protected by their followers. There can be no doubting that they were given pride of place in the Waldensian community, representing the backbone, the structure of the organisation. They brought unity to the diaspora, however far flung it became, however much it broke down into smaller and smaller units, sometimes mere families within which, from generation to generation, whatever perils were to be faced, the dissent was handed down; in their eyes it was the light of truth.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHEN THE WALDENSIANS SPOKE OF THE BARBES

When, like little children,
you can undress without shame,
then take your clothes and trample them underfoot,
then shall you see the son of the Living One
and you shall no fear no more.
Gospel according to Thomas, 37

Now that we have established the nature of the barbes' mission, it is fitting that we consider both how effective their religious teaching was and what opinion the followers held of their preachers. We cannot do so, however, without first sidetracking a little to dwell on a matter that most historians have neglected or even avoided. Which amounts to saying the matter is delicate. It does indeed concern sex, and in today's societies, the prevailing attitudes of hypocrisy and primness masquerading as moral standards incite us to keep off the subject, however damaging this can prove, as we see every day. In the present case, the matter is all the more awkward as far as the Waldensians are concerned, seeing that a whole tradition has been established that praises their exemplary virtue, to the point of making a cult of reverence that is all very well, but which is in reality perhaps a little far-fetched. I therefore intend to dwell a little longer on the issue of the Waldensian "synagogues" to suggest a reading that might steer clear of both ignorance, by definition, and disgrace, for it neither history nor the historian's task to pass judgement.

The Synagogues

I should make it clear from the outset that I can but disapprove of a historical method that consists in ignoring documentation in part or in full whose authenticity is established but which disconcerts for one reason or another. On the contrary, it must be taken into account, to see how information it contains conflates with other sources; if a

hypothesis or solution cannot be found, then better by far to admit our misgivings or disarray. So what is the issue in this case?

We should start from the reputation the Waldensians have acquired in historiography, Protestant historiography most of all but not exclusively in these earnestly ecumenical times. Living in poverty, applying the Holy Scriptures to the letter by rejecting oaths, falsehood and the death penalty, we are told they inspired goodwill around them, from their lords and their fellow men. It was this Christian life that was allegedly seen as a reproach, even a provocation, compared to how the Roman clergy lived. They thus became popular with the local populations and so their sect grew. Such a rosy view of things comes across in a number of testimonies, foremost amongst which is that by the archbishop of Turin, Claude de Seyssel. Having visited the Waldensian valleys in his diocese in 1517, he wrote of the Waldensians saying that apart from their errors, "for the rest, they live strict lives that are purer than other Christians."[1] Coming from such an eminent ecclesiast, whose work was intended to combat Waldensian errors, the argument carries weight. Yet we can still wonder how much the bishop had really learnt about the Waldensians' lives from the few days he spent in their valleys. This is not to question the overall value of his testimony on the Christian lives the Waldensians led, who were probably neither better nor worse than their Catholic contemporaries, but the prelate would doubtless have been more circumspect had he been aware of the "synagogues."

The fact of the matter is that, going by several court records of cross-examinations dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, their moral purity, in our sense of the term at least, was not quite intact. The first mention occurs in Piedmont, during a trial in 1387.[2] The last is found in the records of proceedings against a Waldensian from Piedmont in 1495. Between these two limits, we find declarations made by about twenty out of the hundreds of Waldensians from the Dauphiné tried in 1487–1488, as well as depositions made by the two barbes arrested in Oulx in 1492 which confirm the facts.

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[1] C. de Seyssel, *Adversus errores et sectam valdensium disputationes* . . ., Paris, 1520, f° 9: "In reliquis ferme puriorem coeteri christiani vitam agunt."

[2] G. G. Merlo, *Eretici e inquisitori nella società piemontese del trecento*, Torino, Claudiana, 1977, p. 64, in 1387–89: "Infine il presidente della riunione ordina di spegnere i lumi e pronuncia la frase, a cui seguirebbero manifestazioni di sfrenatezza sessuale" [Finally the president of the reunion orders the light to be put out and pronounces the phrase 'Qui habet, teneat' which would be followed by manifestations of sexual frenesy]."

The general scheme of things is always the same. The barbes arrive in a household where a few neighbours and family members have assembled, and they preach. The scene takes place afterwards. Philippe Rey, the first witness in that period interrogated in 1451, spoke spontaneously, going by the transcription of proceedings, describing the barbe as follows:

> He has a candle lighted and there is only one light there, and he has all the young men and all the girls come, particularly the prettiest ones, and after the sermon has been celebrated, he gets the light blown out and everyone cries out: "Qui ama si tegna" [He who loves holds]. And, they dominate the sisters or daughters or blood cousins, saying that it is not a sin.[3]

When the inquisitor asks him whether it happens that someone takes his own daughter or a female relation, he replies that he does not know, it is possible, but if it happened it would not be a sin, or so the barbes taught. Were this the only testimony of its sort, it would have no great value, not, at any rate, if we applied the legal principle already evoked earlier: "*testis unus, testis nullus*" [one witness is no witness]. This, however, is not the case. Moreover, the nature of the document itself pleads in favour of its being taken more seriously. Indeed, the suspect was talking of his own experience, and the inquisitor's question was not a skewed one whereby he more or less prompted the answer he wished to hear. More disquieting still is the series of allegations from 1487–1488.

It was in the course of several months in those years that the inhabitants of Pragelato, Freissinières, Vallouise and L'Argentière were brought before the tribunal, making a total of almost four hundred peasants, all suspected of Waldensian heresy, and questioned by the ecclesiastical commissary, Albert Cattaneo. Of these, twenty-one refer to the Waldensians' sexual morality, sometimes of their own accord, sometimes in answer to the inquisitor's interrogations.

Of these twenty-one declarations, ten are concerned not with the nocturnal meetings, but with sexual morality in general. One suspect, questioned about "sins of the flesh", replies that he does not know. The nine others touch on the issue without prompting. In each case, the inquisitor asks the suspect individually, separately, in an open

[3] W. Weitzecker, "Processo di un valdese nell'anno 1451", *Rivista Cristiana*, pp. 363–367, p. 366.

question, what it was the barbes taught. In reply, alongside other issues which they expound on, sometimes at length, they refer to sexual matters. The fact that the inquisitor does not prompt these declarations makes it difficult to discount them altogether. Furthermore, to these can be added dozens of other declarations in which the suspect denies taking part in the nocturnal encounters, but admits to having heard of them, which implies that they existed. Guillaume Porte, for example, a twenty-five-year old man from L'Argentière, is asked by the inquisitor if he has ever been in the congregations in which the barbes say "Quis habet habeat et quis tenet teneat" [May he that has, have, may he that holds, hold]; he answers in the negative, but adds that he has heard that some such synagogue or congregation took place at the home of Esprit Bérard.[4]

The issue of such nocturnal reunions must be set in the more general context of how the Waldensians conceived of sexual relations. This is what Pierre Elvotet from Usseaux told the inquisitor:

> The barbes say that the sin of lechery is not a mortal sin, for if someone defiles himself, it is an irremissible sin, which is why he should rather use women [*uti femines*], with the sole exception of his sisters; for all others, he should not worry as it is not a great sin.[5]

The suspect himself does not appear unduly preoccupied by the issue; he carries on with his answer, listing other matters that the barbes had taught and that he remembered. Two other suspects reply in practically the same terms. It is worth listening to what they say, for in this case, we have two women's points of view. The first is Marie, wife of Claude Villot from Pragelato. She declared on December 28, 1487 that "to contract marriage in the second or third degree is not a sin if they are not sisters because amongst other vices, sins of the flesh are reputed to be minor." Beatrice likewise, wife of Antoine Borel from Fenestrelle, says that "to get married in the third or second degree is not a sin" and she goes on to say, "to copulate with men is not a mortal sin because, of all the vices, sins of the flesh are held to be minor."[6] To round off the picture, we should note that two other women, Catherine Pellegrin from Freissinières and Marguerite, wife of Paul Bérard from L'Argentière, aged 22 and 40 respectively,

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[4] Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4351, f° 293 v°, April 18, 1488.
[5] *Ibid.*, B 4350, f° 132, November 17, 1487.
[6] *Ibid.*, f° 240 v° and f° 253 respectively.

both deny having taken part in "synagogues or congregations" held after the barbe's sermon, but in this case they are replying to a direct question put by the inquisitor; they say no more than "no."[7] I believe it important, if we are to understand the situation, that we take into account a declaration that recurs like a leitmotif in the suspects' accounts: "Sins of the flesh are the least of vices," as maintained by Jeanne, wife of Jean Violin Gros, from L'Argentière, amongst others.[8]

Others, such as Georges Borrel from Pragelato, very naturally link sexual morality and marriage: "The barbes say that it is not a sin to marry in the second or third degree and that to have copulation with women is not a mortal sin, because sins of the flesh, amongst vices, are reputed minor." Both Thomas Poncet and Etienne Orsel say the same, adding the biblical justification from Genesis 1, 28: "And God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth." This can be understood bearing in mind that sexual relations were deemed illicit in the society of the times if not for procreative purposes.[9]

Facy Raymond maintained that the barbes "forbade them to know a woman other than one's wife, because it was a great sin." This may have been a way of playing things down to trick the inquisitor. A fuller reply is given by François Porte, aged 25, from L'Argentière: "The barbes teach that there is no great evil in living with women and knowing them carnally, especially those who are not married. But when they are married, it is forbidden to live with a woman if she is not your proper wife."[10]

If we pay attention, are we really faced with licentiousness? Might it not just be a case of different sexual and matrimonial morality, less rigid than that admonished by the Church of Rome, and later by the Reformed Churches? The notion of an overall conception of sexual matters must provide the backcloth to the question of nocturnal reunions, called "synagogues" or "congregations."

First, a word about the name itself, if misunderstandings, confusion or cross purposes are to be avoided. The first step is to leave

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[7] Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4351, ff° 127 v° (April 1, 1488), and 303 v° (April 19, 1488).

[8] *Ibid.*, f° 307, April 19, 1488.

[9] *Ibid.*, B 4350, ff° 246 v° (December 28, 1487), 262 v°, and 264 v° (January 9, 1488).

[10] *Ibid.*, B 4351, ff° 128 (April 1, 1488), and f° 266 (April 1488).

aside the present-day meaning, "a building or place of meeting for Jewish worship," admittedly already used in ancient times, to return to the Greek etymology, "meeting, assembly" then taken up in late Latin, "synagoga." In other words, in late classical times and throughout the middle ages, the term was ambivalent and even ambiguous. It was still the case in the sixteenth century, when Jean Boucher used it, for example, in 1545, with no particular connotation:

> He obeys his superiors,
> Prelates and kings, and their inferiors
> Such as priests, judges and pedagogues,
> Without condemning the holy synagogues.[11]

This example is particularly instructive, concerning as it does the "holy synagogues," thus implying the term could indeed be used to mean "assembly." In the sixteenth century, it could equally mean association, groupment, even mosque and of course synagogue. In other words, the polyvalence of the term means it is essential to situate it in its context, so as to discern whether its use is pejorative or not. The same difficulties were observed earlier concerning the term "sect."

When we examine the documentation from the Dauphiné recording the statements made by the Waldensians in 1487 and 1488, it is revealing to observe that the terms used to designate their reunions are far from neutral. Neither the suspects nor the examining commissary use the term "synagogue" indifferently. The dialogue established with Guigon Bosc, from Mentoulles, provides a good introduction to the dossier:

> Has he participated in reunions or synagogues?
> – Yes, in the house of Thomas Roux, where [he names eight men] were gathered all with their wives and his own wife;
>
> Asked if other Waldensians had carnal knowledge of his said wife during the reunion,
> – He does not know for sure, but he believes he doubts they have;
>
> Asked if he had known a woman,
> – Not in the said synagogue, but in reunions, by day as by night, he has had carnal knowledge of several women, married or not so long as they were 13 or 15 years old for none refused if she was of the sect and it was said that it was not a sin;

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[11] J. Bouchet, *Epistres morales et familieres du Traverseur*, Poitiers, de Marnef, 1545, I, 9.

> Asked how long he remained in the sect,
> – Three years; he entered under pressure from his brothers who threatened and discredited him and he entered mainly so that he could have carnal knowledge of women as he pleased. And he humbly asks for absolution . . .[12]

In this testimony alone there is much to be analysed, commented upon and explained. For our present purposes, we shall focus merely on the fact that Waldensian meetings with sexual overtones are referred to five times here, using two words: reunion and synagogue. The way the question is formulated, "reunions or synagogues", shows that in this case, the second term is being used as a synonym of the first. In fact, reading across the whole series of documents concerning the Dauphiné, five different terms are used to designate the Waldensians' meetings with the barbes: conventicles, encounters, reunions, congregations and synagogues. The last term, however, is always used to refer to reunions of a sexual character. Bearing in mind the context, the term would thus appear to have a pejorative sense. The other terms too can have the same meaning, but the word "synagogue" would appear never to be used to refer to meetings where the barbes preached their sermon. We should note, meanwhile, that the term is absent from the 1451 document.

With this linguistic precision in mind, we can now return to the Waldensians' declarations to examine them more fully. In answer to questions put by the tribunal, two other suspects affirm that they have heard of these reunions, but claim to know nothing about them, having never taken part. Three other suspects, again answering the same specific question, admit to having been present. We have already heard Jean Bérard admitting he attended the reunion, but did not know what happened once the candle had been blown out. Is this naivety or a ruse? Lacking further insights, we can only leave his statement aside and turn to Guigon Bosc, cited above, and Pierre Griot, who are somewhat more explicit. Appearing in court in two successive weeks in October 1487, each man in turn gives details about the place, the participants and the order of events during the nocturnal encounter, thus matching up, some thirty-six years later, with the account given by Philippe Rey in 1451. The last two men to speak of such "congregations," whether Guigon Juvenal, from Villaret

[12] Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4350, f° 74 (October 3, 1487).

in the parish of Mentoulles or Jean Passet, from Pragelato, do so of their own accord:

> The barbes hold congregations. He himself has never attended, however. And, during these congregations, they blow out the candle and the barbes say: "Quis habet, habeat et quis tenet, teneat." Says he knows nothing else.[13]

There are no suspects who admit taking part in the nocturnal reunions if not first prompted by a question to do so, which is hardly surprising; after all, country folk though they were, these people knew very well what were the mentalities of their Roman Catholic contemporaries, the clerics in particular who were often frustrated and obsessed with sex. It is only ever in answer to a question that they attest their presence at such assemblies. The question, however, was often open-ended, as we have seen, prompting no set reply.

The admissions in themselves can but disconcert, and so invite inquiries. So far, we have only heard the followers speaking. Did the barbes have anything to say on the matter? Neither Morel addressing the Basel and Strasbourg Reformers in 1530 nor Pierre Griot questioned by the inquisitor Jean de Roma in 1532 make any mention at all. The same cannot be said of the two barbes arrested and questioned in Oulx in 1492, who are truly expansive. Their depositions run as follows, starting with the barbe Martin:

> Concerning sins of the flesh, on the other hand, in the first place he says that, as they go out into the world and preach by night, they hold reunions and synagogues during which the barbes preach to begin with and, having preached, they start their festivities, amusements and dances, running hither and thither, holding one another close there where they have gathered, with a candle lighted, except for those who are holding hands; and having enjoyed these festivities and these amusements, someone, they know not whom, puts out the light and once it is out, each consummates sins of the flesh with whomever happens to be there; in such a place, there is respect neither for the father, the mother, the daughter nor anyone, saying that, if, in such a synagogue, a son is conceived, later he will be more apt than any other to exercise the office of barbe, for preaching and confession, since he has been born from such a synagogue. And having celebrated the synagogue, everyone leaves.
>
> He says furthermore that the synagogue is held once a year in any land and the barbe from the region where the synagogue is held partici-

[13] *Ibid.*, ff° 180 v° (December 4, 1487), and 202 (December 6, 1487).

> pates because relatives are there, if on the contrary he is not from the region, he merely preaches then he leaves them to have the synagogue amongst themselves; by the fact that he cannot mix with his family and otherwise he would not mix if there were not his family [*sic*].
>
> Conversely, outside the synagogue, they say, maintain and preach that the sin of lechery is not a sin if it is not committed between mother and son and vice versa, between godfather and godmother and not beyond, giving the explanation that between son and mother it was forbidden by God; as a fact, when God rose to heaven he said in the vulgar tongue and in the following form: "Crescite et multiplicate et saint Iohanne gardate et dove sariti salhiti una voulta non tornati pieu."
>
> Asked what these words meant, he said that God, as he rose into the heavens, had said these words signifying that man must not return to the belly of the mother whence he had come, and saying "See John the Baptist", meaning that Saint John the Baptist had baptised Christ and that is why, according to holy law, carnal union is forbidden between a son and his godmother; conversely all other carnal copulation is allowed because it is not forbidden by God, only by the Church, and therefore they knew one another indifferently and copulated carnally, and did not refuse each other mutually because it is better to espouse than to burn.
>
> He says furthermore that between them it is an honour when the barbes know the daughters of the Waldensians and of the sect.

The barbe Pierre also testified in words that both echo and differ from those of his companion, describing the reunions and adding remarks on the Waldensians' sexual morality:

> Questioned about the way a synagogue is organised, he replies like the precedent, except that the present witness says that each barbe takes his wife wherever the synagogue is held.
>
> Asked why the said synagogue is held, he replies that it derives from the fact that they as a custom were in the habit of adoring a certain idol called Bacchus and Baron and also the Sibyl and the fairies and that Baron and the fairies were accustomed to holding congregations during which there was no respect between daughter and father, nor with the godmother, as there is, however, outside the said synagogue. And in the synagogue, by night, when the candle was out, they mixed and each took the woman he could have, without recognising her and without speaking while the synagogue lasted; and if a son was begotten, he was the most appropriate and apt to exercise the office of barbe; and he said other things, that his companion had said previously.
>
> On the sin of lechery in the first place says, as was said above, that going through the world and preaching by night, they hold synagogues in which the barbes preach to begin with, and then, once the preaching

> is over and the candle is out, when the same barbe commands it, they mix by running about and then, confused to the point of no longer recognising themselves and so that they no longer recognise one another, each takes the woman he holds by the hand, without speaking to each other, until the carnal act has been accomplished. Then they move apart. In the said synagogue, they have no concern for the mother or for the daughter, nor for the brother or the sister, and for the godmother either. In reality, except in the said synagogue, they behave conscientiously: they abstain from the mother, the daughter, the godmother and the godfather only. The synagogue is held once a year.
>
> He says furthermore that by common accord they help one another mutually, meaning the women dare not refuse themselves; and while the barbes preach, and are in the said places, when they want to have women, they choose the one they want who, even though she be married, will not contradict them; and when a barbe has carnal knowledge of the wives of the Waldensians of the said sect, they consider and believe it to be a great honour.[14]

The passages are admittedly long, but they are worth quoting in full to give the reader today an overall view of the matter. The accounts do indeed surprise, even by the details of festivities and dancing which they add to the more sober presentations given earlier. They even speak of barbes copulating, in striking contrast with the vows of chastity described previously. He further complicates matters by evoking some form of Bacchic cult with Sibylline overtones; this would seem quite incongruous, unless it has a folkloric or mythical resonance, since the barbe Pierre does not actually state that the Waldensians partook of the cult. Conversely, the Latin formula which occurs frequently in the 1487–1488 declarations is not cited by the barbes.

Thus we have a full view of the dossier on Waldensian synagogues, in which accounts differ but never contradict one another. What should we make of it? How can we interpret it? Most historians prefer to keep silent.[15] Others, in the line of Reformation historiography in particular, refer to the matter to refute the allegations, presenting the Waldensians as Reformist trail-blazers. The Protestant pastor G. Miolo adopts such a vindicative approach in his late sixteenth-century *Histoire*, specifying that the Waldensians "were accused of

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[14] M. Benedetti, "L'interrogatorio dei barba Martino e Pietro (1492)", G. Tourn, *Il barba*, Torino, Claudiana, XVII Febbraio 2001, pp. 53–62, 56, and 60–61 respectively.

[15] I myself, in my earlier work, *The Waldensian Dissent*, felt I could not, or should not, touch upon the matter.

numerous and great crimes, such as incestuous fornication . . . But this is pure, contrived slander such as, in truth, the like slander which was likewise alleged in a most iniquitous fashion by pagans against Christians of the primitive Church according to the accounts by Tertullian, Eusebius and other classical historians."[16] Other "apologists" of the Waldensians followed suit:

> These barbes in particular, and in general all the Waldensian people were (even by their adversaries, who knew them in the valleys and surrounding areas) held to be lovers of all virtue and enemies of all vice, and there was hardly but the impassioned papal clergy, who showed that they held them in low esteem and reputation, holding against them not just a few visible vices, for there are but few that were not attributed to them, but also accused them of gathering by night to commit acts of impudicity in secret (which slander was formerly attributed by pagans to the followers of the primitive Church.[17]

We do indeed find an undercurrent of this sort in accounts and court proceedings across the centuries, defending and denouncing minorities, religious ones in particular. Similar allegations are made of the first Christians, the Jews, Cathars, Hussites, sorcerers . . . so why not Waldensians too?[18] This is the attitude adopted by the few historians who allude to nocturnal reunions amongst the Waldensians. M. Lambert, for instance, brings his summary to a close by admitting, "The story, it is clear, could be applied to any unpopular movement, and in the

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[16] G. Miolo, *Historia breve & vera de gl'affari de i Valdesi delle Valli*, Torino, Claudiana, 1971, p. 97.

[17] P. Gilles, *Histoire ecclésiastique des Églises vaudoises* . . ., Genève, 1644, reed. Pignerol, Chiantore & Mascarelli, 1881, 2 v., v. 1, pp. 17–18. As G. Gonnet puts it, 'Casi di sincretismo ereticale in Piemonte nei secoli XIV e XV, *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi*, n. 108, 1960, pp. 3–36; reed. *Id*, *Il Grano e le Zizzanie*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino editore, 1989, 3 v., v. 1, pp. 231–275, p. 271: "Tutti gli storici valdesi, dal Perrin al Léger, dal Monastier al Muston, dal Comba all'Arnaud e al Weitzecker ecc., hanno severamente reagito di fronte a queste accuse di immoralità, giudicandole prive di ogni fondamento di verità, frutto solo dell'odio e del pregiudizio, 'ces deux yeux de l'esprit fanatique qui a toujours été le démon de la religion dominante, officielle, depuis l'antiquité' [All Waldensian historians . . . have reacted sternly to these accusations of immorality, judging them to be lacking in all grounding in truth, solely the fruit of hate and prejudice, 'those two eyes of the fanatical mind, which has always been the demon of the dominant, official religion since ancient times' . . .]

[18] On the Jews, see for example: R. Po-Chia Hsia, *Trent 1475. Stories of a ritual Murder Trial*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 1992; for the Cathars and a number of other medieval heresies, including the Waldensians, see: M. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy. Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1977, 1992.

fourteenth century the Waldensians were losing ground in public opinion."[19] Similarly E. Cameron in his latest work on the Waldensians, who devotes twenty-four lines of the three-hundred page study to the issue, maintains: "Given the hundreds of interrogations which survive, relatively few contain details of such allegations; and most have something about them which makes one doubt the evidence." He goes on to conclude, "The Waldenses were in fact morally strict to the point of puritanism and may have attracted hostile suspicion by that very characteristic."[20] P. Paravy adopts a similar line in her very fine study of religious life in the Dauphiné in the late middle ages; of the 270 pages devoted to the Waldensians, a mere twenty lines dispatch the matter, without ever having really presented the dossier:

> The interrogatories held in the valleys at the time of the crusade about the Waldensian 'synagogues' and repulsive acts that took place once the light had been put out and the barbe had pronounced the ritual formula 'quis habet habeat' or 'go forth and multiply', generally obtained nothing but astonished denials . . . and it was only in the more punctilious interrogatories, whose methods we can well imagine, that those against whom the most pressing charges were being made came to formulate the expected avowals about incestuous unions that were imagined to be most commonly practised.[21]

My personal feeling is that the testimonies have been dismissed too hastily, rather superficially, even before they have been examined. Why should other facts be maintained, even when the number of witnesses is often smaller, as in the case for example over the existence of "barbes' houses", while the present facts are refuted, revealing an *a priori* judgement that they leave unclarified. This is clearly the case for both authors quoted above, where a number of imprecise or highly subjective terms can be traced in the passages cited: "few", "most" in the

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[19] M. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, *op. cit.*, 1992, p. 165.

[20] E. Cameron, *Waldenses. Rejections of Holy Church in Medieval Europe*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2000, p. 192.

[21] P. Paravy, *De la chrétienté romaine à la Réforme en Dauphiné*, Rome, EFR, 1993, 2 v., v. 2, p. 1074: "Les interrogatoires conduits dans les vallées à l'époque de la croisade au sujet des 'synagogues' vaudoises et des actes répugnants qui s'y accomplissaient après que la lumière eût été éteinte et que le barbe eût prononcé les formules rituelles 'quis habet habeat', ou 'croissez et multipliez', n'avaient généralement obtenu que des dénégations étonnées . . . et ce ne fut que dans les interrogatoires plus minutieux, dont on suppose facilement les méthodes, que l'on put obtenir des principaux responsables les propos qu'on attendait sur les unions incestueuses que l'on imaginait en être la pratique la plus courante."

first instance; "generally," "astonished," "more punctilious interrogatories," "whose methods we can well imagine", "the expected avowals," "that were imagined" in the second; such affirmations or allusions as those ought to be proved and not merely asserted. They may well prove to be founded, but the case has first to be argued.

How to explain these Waldensian declarations? Several hypotheses can be put forward. The first and the most obvious, that underlying P. Paravy's stand, is that the classic tale of moral vice was present in the mind of the inquisitor who, using more or less violent means of persuasion, forced the suspect to make the avowals he expected and more or less prompted. If this were the case, it would not stand alone. C. Ginzburg, particularly in his study of the Benandanti, showed how the inquisitors, simply by misunderstanding or misconceiving a popular mind-set that was so very different to his own, came to deform the statements made by peasant folk being questioned, and thereby to transform their evocations of traditional rural folklore into sorcery, and hence into crimes of heresy.[22] Likewise, I was able to demonstrate how an inquisitor came, consciously or not, to condemn a poor mentally deranged woman to the stake for heresy in Provence in the 1530s, by simply misinterpreting and aggravating her declarations.[23] Could the same thing have happened to the Waldensians in the Alps in the late fifteenth century?

First, the facts must be weighed up quantitatively. References to "synagogues" are to be found in 8% of depositions—a low, but not insignificant figure, enough to suggest a link with the real world outside. The question is not put systematically to all suspects, and they do not all refer to the issue. This can hardly come as a surprise, bearing in mind the perils and the social taboo on sex generally in society at the time and in the ecclesiastical world in particular. The attitude of the four women is revealing: two speak of themselves, but only within the limits of sexual morality in general; the other two, expressly questioned on the "congregations", claim to know nothing. The inquisitor therefore appears not to have doggedly applied a mental scheme of things, his own view, so as to accumulate proof of sexual crimes,

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[22] C. Ginzburg, *I benandanti. Stregoneria e culti agrari tra Cinquecento e Seicento*, Torino, Einaudi, 1966.

[23] G. Audisio, "La fiabilité des sources dans le cas d'une Inquisition médiévale à la Renaissance. Provence, vers 1530", *L'Inquisizione romana: metodologia delle fonti e storia istituzionale*, Università di Trieste-Cirdolo culturale Menocchio Montereale Valcellina, 2000, pp. 33–49.

which he would have lost no time recording had it been the case, particularly where women were concerned.

The second thing to note is that no mention of torture or even the threat of torture is made, although it was a perfectly legal practice which the court records would have indicated, as they do elsewhere. We should also recall that the suspects had been summoned by courts which expected admissions of heresy, not of sexual crimes. In the absence of proof or even clues, we cannot presume avowals to have been obtained by force.

Another hypothesis might be that knowing the inquisitor's mental set which would incline him to expect an account of this sort from the suspects, they told him what he wanted to hear more or less without being asked. Yet here too, although it is not impossible, as has been shown in cases of witchcraft,[24] there would have to be some lead or clue in the sources, which is not the case.

A third possibility would be that, as in the case of the crime of witchcraft, the avowals reflect the popular imagination rather than any actual facts, echoing legendary tales perhaps in a way reminiscent of other slanderous allegations made against minorities and clandestine sects. Such a train of thought is not to be overlooked, but again elements would have to be found in the source documents concerning the Waldensian population of the times in that particular region of the Alps.

The explanation yet to be considered, that tends to be dismissed before being examined seriously, is the following: and what if these testimonies referred to real facts? In other words, why not try taking these admissions of participation in the Waldensian synagogues seriously? How might they fit in with what other sources reveal about the Waldensians and their barbes? To suggest an answer, we need to get a grasp of the cultural context. First, from a general angle, there is no doubting that as time passed, over the centuries, the ecclesiastical authorities waged a continuous war against, and adopted a negative attitude towards, sex; virginity was their ideal. An attitude of generalised, official suspicion prevailed towards sexual activities, other than within the strict bounds of marriage, which was equally defined and surveyed in the strictest terms. Sexual activities were not routed out even so. On the contrary, it would appear that underground, clan-

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[24] R. Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers en France au XVII^e siècle*, Paris, Plon, 1968; and C. Ginzburg, *op. cit.*

destine, more or less secret behavioural patterns still persisted, amongst rural populations in particular which are generally less successfully controlled. For these reasons, and despite protestations in principle, carnival has never been eradicated. It enabled populations to break rules and disrupt ordinary conventions, and was tolerated or even encouraged, including on matters of sexual excess thus occasioned, for in this way it provided a safety valve in a society where constraints were manifold and severe.

There is a possibility that uncontrolled coupling goes back to an age-old need, particularly when linked to a rite of integration, as described by A. van Gennep, the renowned folklorist and anthropologist:

> As for "sexual licence" following initiatory ceremonies where, as in the ceremonies of certain Russian sects, men and women unite as they will or as they can, far from seeing this as a left-over of so-called "primitive promiscuity", I see it as a complete expression of the same idea of aggregation: it is the exact equivalent of the communal meal of which all the members of the same social group partake . . . All the men are united with all the women, so that the union between members of the society, be it special, totemic, heretical, etc . . . might be profound and complete.[25]

Thinking along these lines may help interpret the Waldensian dossier. Even so, to avoid falling into the pitfalls denounced above, we need to isolate certain factors that would justify our reading the Waldensian documents from this angle. Here, two elements spontaneously evoked by several suspects can be of use, referring to two moral rules about sexual behaviour that were less severe than those of the society of the times, controlled by Rome. First, the fact that marriage in the second or third degree is not forbidden. The fourth Lateran council consecrated a long tradition, albeit one where variations were frequent in different countries and even different regions, when in 1215 it limited impediments of consanguinity and legitimate affinity to the fourth degree, known as germane or canonical; any closer unions were forbidden. This amounts to saying that if the Waldensians did not submit to the norm, they were only biding by an earlier rule, thereby maintaining their faithfulness to more archaic practices, as they did in other domains too, as we have seen, such as refusing to believe in purgatory for example.

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[25] A. van Gennep, *Les rites de passage . . .*, Paris, Nourry, 1909, reed. Paris, Picard 1969, 1981, pp. 243–244.

The second factor is to consider that sins of the flesh are minor, sometimes minimal or even not sins at all. Here too, there is a long Christian tradition, which became an underground, minority belief but which still resurfaces from time to time, particularly among dissenting minorities.[26] A number of dissents can be inscribed in this tradition. G. Merlo identified it in Piedmont at the end of the fourteenth century amongst Waldensians influenced by Cathar principles, where the same ritual phrase we observed a century later was used.[27] Jacques Ristolassio justified it to the inquisitor in 1395. Asked if it was a sin to have sexual relations with virgins and girls, he composedly answered that it was not. What is most interesting is his added comment, "Were it a sin, the Church would not be holy."[28] This strikes us as incomprehensible, and at best surprising, thus confirming that we are dealing with a mind-set that is different to ours. In fact, the explanation can be found, as G. Gonnet suggested, in the New Testament, in Paul's letter to Titus to be more precise: "Unto the pure all things are pure" (Titus, 1, 15), meaning he that is holy cannot sin.[29] Might we not see this as a reference to the state of perfection that heretics attained, going by a suggestion made by the Brethren of the Free Spirit? To which can be added an eschatological perspective that was relatively developed in dissenting communities in the late middle ages.

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[26] R. E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the later Middle Ages*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1972.

[27] G. G. Merlo, *Eretici e inquisitori, op. cit.*, p. 71: "Le prime attestazioni di lassismo sessuale si trovano nel registro dell'inquisitore Antonio di Settimo degli anni 1387–1389. Pressoché a tutti i gruppi eterodossi subalpini viene attribuito l'uso di 'se carnaliter comiscere', di unirsi carnalmente al termine delle riunioni di culto, dopo che il 'magister' aveva pronuinciato la frase 'Qui habet, teneat' e fatto spegnere i lumi ('extinguere lumina'). Stranamente alcuni studiosi hanno accettato tali testimonianze . . ." [The first time that sexual laxity is attested is in the register of the inquisitor Antonio of Settimo for the years 1387–1389. Nearly all the subalpine heterodox groups are attributed the custom of uniting carnally at the end of cultic meetings, after the master had pronounced the phrase "He who has, holds" and had the lights put out. Strangely enough, no scholar has accepted such testimonies . . .]

[28] G. G. Merlo, *ibid.*, p. 73: "Si est eis peccatum stare carnaliter cum virginibus et pocellis, il Ristolassio risponde negativamente, precisando che 'si esset peccatum, ecclesia non esset sancta'.

[29] G. Gonnet, "Casi di sincretismo ereticale in Piemonte nei secoli XIV e XV", *op. cit.*, p. 273. It is not without interest to note that Pierre Griot, cross-examined in 1532 about fasting and abstinence, replied "that every creature of God is good, which is taken giving thanks to God, and pure things [*mundes*] are good for the pure [*mundes*]." (G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur, op. cit.*, p. 83).

One difficulty, admittedly, remains outstanding: did the barbes themselves partake in the sexual unions? Only two testimonies bear out the suggestion, those by the barbes Martin and Pierre in 1492 quoted above. Not being in a position to give a hypothesis by way of explanation, the simplest of which would no doubt be to suggest it is a double exception to the rule, a geographical one perhaps, we shall not retain the allegation, but prefer not to dismiss it altogether either; let us rather admit that their admissions present an interpretative difficulty. Nevertheless, we did read in the Morel report the acknowledgement "And yet, to speak openly and sincerely (for I do speak to you with much trust) we are not always treated chastely." Does this avowal contain an allusion to the "congregations"? Furthermore, the same document refers to sanctions for sexual misconduct: "When someone has committed a carnal sin, he is expelled from our society."[30] Personally, I tend to think the barbes were indeed bound not only by celibacy but also by chastity, a ruling that was perhaps all the more firm to mark the contrast with their flocks.

From this perspective, it is not absurd to advance a different reading of the "synagogues", interpreting them not as pure figments of the inquisitors' imagination or as imaginary fantasies voiced by a few, psychologically disturbed suspects. Might it not have been, in this case, one of the very pragmatic solutions found to maintain the sect, condemned as it was to endogamy if it wanted to survive? This amounts to saying we are faced with different sexual ethics that lasted, attributable both to a primeval rural provenance and to an attitude born of contestation to the established Church in favour of fidelity to older modes of life. In this case, it would be abusive as well as erroneous to speak of sexual licence or orgies, particularly since everything appears to have been perfectly limited and overviewed: once a year, under the barbes' control. An ethnological reading of this sort could enable us to observe hidden or disguised practices that belonged to a world which had long been thought to be lost.[31] Without being absolutely certain, for establishing proof in historical research can be a delicate matter, I believe a vision of this sort, such

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[30] V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede dei valdesi riformati*, Torino, Claudiana, 1975, pp. 38–39 and 40–41.

[31] The approach is explained in P. Laslett, *The World we have lost. England Before the Industrial Age*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965, 1971, 1984, in particular, ch. 7, "Personal discipline and social order", pp. 153–181 for our present purposes.

as G. Gonnet and G. Merlo have already suggested, has the merit of not discarding a dossier on the grounds that it appears awkward or inexplicable, but which, by resetting it within its cultural and religious context, can actually offer a certain coherency.

I hope my reader will understand the detour I have undertaken about the "synagogues," but it was necessary that they be presented and that a clearer idea be made of them, particularly in view of the fact that they concern the barbes directly since synagogues could not take place without them. The barbes' presence was thus a guarantee that everything happened according to a set pattern, whilst also giving a necessary legitimacy to what went on. We should not, however, lose sight of the fact that only about twenty Waldensians from the Alps touch upon the issue in one way or another. The preachers' teaching on the other hand is far more substantially documented.

Good Teachers?

All those who have attempted to assess the impact and effectiveness of education, whether written or oral, even to this day, know how difficult the task can be. The obstacles are all the greater for the historian, who has perforce to rely on documentation alone. The question cannot be dismissed, however, whether in terms of the preachers or of any other pedagogues.[32] The time has therefore come for us too to wonder how the barbes' message was received and what the followers retained of it. There is obviously a good deal to be learnt from what remained in the listeners' minds and memories.

No need to imagine: we know the inevitable gap between religious truth such as it is proclaimed in theory and the ways in which it is applied. But do we necessarily appreciate quite how many forms such divergences can take? Once the expression of a belief has been defined and fixed, that is to say set in a formula, it has first to be understood by the one who is to pass it on. The quality of the transmission is dependent on the teacher or preacher's competence. Next, there is the question of how well they remember what they have heard. It is worth pausing a while on this factor, without yet con-

[32] H. Martin, *Le métier de prédicateur à la fin du Moyen Âge, 1350–1520*, Paris, Cerf, 1988, for instance briefly examines "a few, observable results", pp. 604–610.

sidering what can happen in practice and in the choice of words. This already gives an idea of the various levels of transmission where disparity can occur. Saint Thomas of Aquinas sums it up remarkably in an adage that does not translate easily: "Quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur": Whatever is received depends on the receiver's means of receiving.

In the course of the dozens or even hundreds of cross-examinations led by the inquisitors and judges, the same question was regularly asked: "What did the barbes say?" The very open question frequently prompted Waldensians to define what their preachers taught. Admittedly, their answers did not always satisfy the examining magistrates, who persisted with questions on finer points. As a result, we have at our disposal a broad spectrum of responses. Such a corpus is in fact quite rare, enabling us as it does to measure what the Waldensians retained of the barbes' teaching.

In most cases, answers were brief, particularly in the case of the Waldensians from the Alps during the 1487–1488 crusade; there are some, however, who reply in greater depth, and of these, eleven, already quoted for the most part on other issues, were questioned between 1451 and 1526 in Piedmont, the Dauphiné Alps or the Valentinois. They can be presented as follows:[33]

Date	Christian name	Patronymic	Place of residence	Province
1451	Philippe	Rey	Pinerolo	Piedmont
1488	Poncet	Brunet al. Roux	Freissinières	Dauphiné (Alps)
1488	François	Bret	Freissinières	Dauphiné (Alps)
1488	Jean	Bret	Freissinières	Dauphiné (Alps)
1488	Jean	Anthoard	Freissinières	Dauphiné (Alps)
1488	Pierre	Roman	Freissinières	Dauphiné (Alps)
1489	Pierre	Valoy	Saint-André	Dauphiné (Alps)
1494	Monet	Rey	Saint-Mamans	Dauphiné (Valentinois)
1494	Peyronette	—	Beauregard	Dauphiné (Valentinois)
1495	Thomas	Guiot	Pragelato	Dauphiné (Alps)
1526	Jacques	Ressent	Bec Dauphin	Piedmont

[33] Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4350 et 4351. Philippe Rey (Regis): W. Weitzecker, "Processo di un valdese nell'anno 1451", *Rivista Cristiana*, 1881, pp. 363–367 (Latin).

Statements made by the barbes themselves—the two companions arrested and interrogated in Oulx in 1492, Pierre Griot, questioned in 1532, Jean Serre, examined in 1536 and again in 1539, as well as Georges Morel's report—are deliberately being left aside for the present purposes. These documents have already been examined elsewhere, and although they give detailed accounts on questions of faith, they do not necessarily reflect what the followers themselves believed. And the followers are precisely who we are interested in at this stage of our inquiry, so as to weigh up not so much what the beliefs and practices of the Waldensians were in themselves, but what they testified about them when asked to do so, always in the particularly dramatic conditions of the courtroom.

Even so few as eleven testimonies would be too long to reproduce here, and would make fastidious reading presented as a list of beliefs and practices. Twelve affirmations, however, come back time and again in one form or another:

1. There are only two ways in the hereafter; there is no purgatory but in this world itself.
2. All water is holy; it is as good to be buried in a cemetery as it is anywhere else; it is as good to pray at home as it is in church.
3. "One's power is equal to one's goodness": the barbes preach and hear confessions and they have the power to give and withhold absolution because they lead good lives.
4. Priests have no power because they lead bad lives.
5. Only the old period of Lent should be upheld, because God fasted only forty days; meat can be eaten on Saturdays.
6. Saints have no power: they should not be addressed in prayer and their feast-days should not be honoured; images of Christ and the saints are material, they have no value; abstinence at vigils is pointless.

Les cinq vaudois de Freissinières: J. Chevalier, *Mémoire historique sur les Hérésies en Dauphiné avant le XVI^e^ siècle*, Valence, Jules Céas et fils, 1890, pp. 145–152 (Latin). Pierre Valoy: J. Marx, *L'inquisition en Dauphiné*, Paris, Champion, 1914; Marseille, Laffitte Reprints, 1978, pp. 244–254 (Latin). Monet Rey: E. Arnaud, *Mémoires historiques sur . . . les vaudois du Dauphiné*, Crest, 1896, pp. 28–31 (translation into French); Peyronette: *ibid*., pp. 32–44 (translated in French). Thomas Guiot: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms fr. 17811 (Latin) and Ms Lat. 3375 (1), ff° 218 v° sq; see M. Benedetti, "I processi contro Tommaso Guiot", *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi*, n. 192, Giugno 2003, pp. 3–27. Jacques Ressent: G. Marini Nevache, "Verbale dell'interrogatorio di Iacopo Ressent di Bec Dauphin accusato di eresia", *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi*, n. 186, Giugno 2000, pp. 3–34 (Latin and translation into Italian).

7. One should not swear.
8. One should not lie.
9. To denounce someone from the sect is an irredeemable sin.
10. Sins of the flesh are not great sins.
11. It is better to give to a poor man than to make donations after one's death or to go on pilgrimages.
12. The *Ave Maria* is just a salutation; only the Lord's Prayer is prescribed.

A chart can be drawn up recording how these declarations figure in the testimonies of the eleven suspects listed above, showing the frequency with which they occur which in turn gives an idea of how widespread various aspects of faith were (the figures heading the columns refer to the twelve articles cited above):

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**Total**
Philippe Rey	x					x				x	x	x	6
Pons Brunet	x	x	x	x		x	x						6
François Bret	x					x		x	x				4
Jean Bret			x	x		x							3
Jean Anthoard	x			x	x	x							4
Pierre Roman	x		x	x		x	x	x					6
Pierre Valoy	x	x	x	x		x	x						6
Monet Rey	x	x	x	x		x	x				x		7
Peyronette	x	x		x		x	x		x		x		7
Thomas Guiot	x		x	x			x		x	x			6
Jacques Ressent	x					x					x		3
Total	10	4	6	8	1	10	6	2	3	2	4	1	

The sample is interesting, even if it is, admittedly, rather narrow. What we need is a larger number of testimonies, if only to conflate them with the above. And this is just what we happen to have in the broad series of cross-examinations carried out in the Dauphiné Alps by Albert Cattaneo in 1487, a dossier frequently referred to already. We shall now concentrate on it more fully. Take the first register, for instance: the tribunal examined 173 people from October 3 to December 24, 1487, a total of eleven weeks which amounts to sixty-eight days if we discount Sundays and feast-days, making an average of 2–3 cross-examinations per day.[34] This is of course only a

[34] Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4350, ff° 72 v°–238 v°.

theoretical average, for the tribunal did not sit every day; it had a good many other matters to deal with. On October 5, only two men were questioned, while on Tuesday December 4, 49 suspects came in turn before the tribunal. Another 45 were heard on Thursday 6, but between December 13 and 23, matters were interrupted. Of the 173 inhabitants of the Chisone valley brought for questioning, 53 were not held for Waldensian beliefs. Several folios have been damaged by damp, rendering them illegible. Of the testimonies in a fit state to be of use, a certain number claim not to know anything; the court clerk actually noted down in the margin of certain depositions the very brief mention "non est de secta" [is not of the sect]. There are others who give practical indications about the barbes' reunions or other precisions about the Waldensian community, but say nothing of the teaching. On the other hand, 124 suspects provide information about Waldensian doctrine or practice. The interrogatory always follows the same pattern. After the introduction, and before the closing formula, both indispensable clauses if judicial form was to be respected, the inquisitor asked two questions, before leaving time for an answer, all duly noted down by the court clerk: "Have you ever confessed to a barbe?" and "What did the barbes say to you?" The answers to the second question are what interest us here.[35]

The 124 depositions vary considerably in length and in precision. The same twelve points cited above recur, with similar variations in frequency. No suspect lists them all. Two evoke eleven points, three refer to ten, two give nine, and two others eight. At the other end of the scale, five people refer to only one point, thirteen mention only two, and twenty name three. Notwithstanding such variations, it is still remarkable that seventy Waldensians, i.e. 56% of the suspects, name at least five articles.

It is revealing likewise to examine these articles. Two crop up far more frequently than any others. First the denial of purgatory, affirmed by 111 Waldensians, which is 90%. The question is evoked in different ways: "Purgatory does not exist", to which a good number add "except

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[35] See, for example, Vincent Cler, of Villaret in the parish of Mentoulles in the Chisone Valley, examined on December 12, 1487; he has just admitted that he entered the sect twenty years before when he confessed to a barbe and has confessed twice in all. The court clerk notes "Interrogatur de doctrina sibi data per dictos barbas valdensium" [He is questioned about the doctrine given him by the said Waldensian barbes.] (*ibid.*, f° 230 v°).

in this world;" many others use a formula which appears stereotyped, so frequently does it recur in the exact same terms: "There are only two ways, hell and heaven;" some say no more than "it is vain to pray for the dead." There are a few who accumulate various elements, such as Jean Lantelme: "There is no purgatory, which is why it is vain to pray for the dead because, when they die, either they are saved or they are damned." The denial of purgatory logically links up with suffrages for the dead, which is expressed very clearly by Bonnet Martin, of Mentoulles: "You should not pray for the dead because there is no purgatory."[36]

Secondly, the most frequent article, cited 112 times, which is remarkably close to the previous one, is most frequently termed as follows: "Prayers should be addressed to God alone, and not to the saints." Extra precisions are sometimes given: "Prayers should not be addressed to the saints and saintesses of God for God alone can help us", as Vincent Cler puts it. Pierre Griot adds, "Prayers should not be addressed to the saints and saintesses because they were once men like us, because God alone can help us." Similarly Claude Fabre, questioned on Christmas Eve, specifies: "Prayers should not be addressed to the saints and saintesses because they cannot hear our prayers and God alone can help us."[37] Often, the denial of the cult of saints goes hand in hand with a statement affirming the pointlessness of celebrating their feast-days and vigils. Catherine's declaration reads as follows: "God alone should be prayed to, but not the saints who do not hear our prayers nor do they understand what happens on earth, and their feast days should not concern us."[38] Daniel Mathéod equally evokes the denial of the cult of images: "The images of Christ and the saints are material, they should not be held in esteem."[39] Facy Juvenal among others, links the matter to an inevitable rejection of pilgrimages: "It is better to give money for the love of God to the poor of Christ than to make pilgrimages and *roumpetagia*."[40] The foremost beliefs for the Waldensians, going by what they themselves told the inquisitor, were thus the cult of God alone and the denial of purgatory.

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[36] *Ibid*., f° 145. Same formula, with a causal link: ff° 168 v° (Gertusa), 179 (Françoise).

[37] *Ibid*.,: ff° 130, 203 v°, 236 v°, 238.

[38] *Ibid*., f° 166 v°: Catherine, wife of Jacques Lantelme.

[39] *Ibid*., f° 181.

[40] *Ibid*., f° 183 v°; the Provençal term "roumavagi" means pilgrimage.

In third position, occurring 63 times, are declarations concerning Lent, which might strike us today as curious. The wording most often encountered is: "Lent must begin on the Monday after Shrove Tuesday", or "the Monday after Quadragesima Sunday."[41] Others simply say, "Lent must last forty days." Rarer are those who can or wish to offer an explanation. One woman adds, "according to the old Ambrosian model," another reasons that "God fasted only for forty days."[42] As a fact, if Lent extends from Ash Wednesday to Easter, it is longer than forty days. Twenty-six times, the question of Lent goes alongside another affirmation: "Meats can be eaten on Saturday." The link with Lent is clear: these were times traditionally set aside for abstinence. We might add that, going by what they do not say, the Waldensians seem to accept the forty-day fast of Lent and abstinence on Fridays; this can be explained as a concession made to those around them; it was a way of dissimulating, the price of survival.

Quite logically, the next most frequently mentioned aspect of their belief concerns the barbes. Very early on in many depositions the Waldensians evoke contrasts between barbes and clerics. They evidently sought to justify their position by comparing the power of both: well founded in the case of the former, empty in the other. Fifty-five times the barbes are mentioned, very often by way of underlining the contrast observed with the Roman clergy. Sometimes the turn of phrase is abrupt, and rather enigmatic; it recurs however in fuller, more explicit terms which make the meaning far clearer: "The barbes have the power" [*potestas*]; "The barbes have the power to absolve." Jean Lantelme establishes a link between power and lifestyle, saying: "That the barbes led the life of the apostles and that the Church of God is with them but not with the priests of the Church of Rome who lead bad lives . . . That they are all-powerful, that all those of the sect are saved, that they can preach, hear confessions and also consecrate the body of Christ."[43] If we relied only on this formula-

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[41] Shrovetide: the three days before Lent and Shrove Tuesday in particular; Quadragesima: the first Sunday after the beginning of Lent.

[42] *Ibid.*, Catherine, wife of Thomas Lantelme: f° 116 v°; Catherine, wife of Barthélemy Lantelme, f° 118.

[43] *Ibid.*, f° 130. This mention of the Eucharist is to be found only twice in the corpus studied of 124 depositions. The second mention, by Jean Durand, is more guarded, only evoking the possibility, as will be seen below, not a reality, saying that if the barbes wished to do so, they could consecrate the body of Christ: Jean Durand, of Villaret parish of Mentoulles, December 12, 1487 (f° 233 v°). That the Waldensians believed in the sacrament of the Eucharist is established, as Morel

tion, we might tend to think, for example, that the commendable lives of the Waldensian ministers were only the sign of their power, and inversely so for the clergy. A good number of followers, however, are more explicit. Marguerite is clearer on the point: "Authority is on a par with goodness; the prelates of the church who live badly have no power because their indulgences, their censures and their confessions are void."[44] Others go one step further: "The barbes imitate the apostles and are called 'the Poor of Christ' because they lead a saintly life and the Church of God is with them and because prelates of the Church of Rome who live badly have no authority."[45] In such instances, the causal link appears clearly established: a commendable life itself bestows authority, of which it is not the mere sign but the cause. This is what was known as "Donatism", already discussed in the early pages of the work. Its key formula, always presented in the same terms, comes over as a sort of adage:

> Quantum quis habet bonitatem
> Tantum habet et auctoritatis.

It is quoted, for example, by Etienne Bonardel, who adds immediately after, "Their sect is better than others because they lead apostolic lives."[46] The strong causal link is expressed several times in terms that are both simple and forceful, as in the following case: "The barbes live apostolic lives and so they have the power", or in a similar turn of phrase, "The barbes are good, they lead apostolic lives and the Church is in them."[47] Antoine Pastor too voices the same belief: "The barbes lead apostolic lives which is why they must be believed more than the priests of the Church of Rome whose lives are too lax."[48] The fullest and most detailed formulation is given by Jean Durand, of Villaret, in the parish of Mentoulles:

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acknowledges in his report when he specifies that the Waldensians believed in more than two sacraments, which can only have been baptism and the Eucharist (V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede, op. cit.*, p. 40: "credentes plura quam duo sacramenta"). What is not known is the conception they had of this sacrament. Very probably it changed from one era to another, from one region to the next, and even amongst the community at any one time.

[44] *Ibid.*, f° 120.

[45] *Ibid.*, f° 139.

[46] *Ibid.*, f° 174; the formula as given by Jacques Lantelmet runs: "Tantum quis habet de auctoritate, quantum quis habet de sanctitate" (f° 115 v°), and by Antoine Pastor : "Quantum quis habet bonitatis, tantum habet et auctoritatis" (f° 176). The Latin, with its very slight variations, speaks in favour of their authenticity.

[47] *Ibid.*, f° 207 and 219 v° respectively.

[48] *Ibid.*, f° 176.

> Their sect is better than others because they lead apostolic lives and follow the life of Christ and of poverty, whereas the priests of the Church of Rome live badly and pursue riches. Because they lead a better life, the barbes say that they have more power than the priests of the Church of Rome because one's goodness is on a par with one's authority and that if they wished to do so they could consecrate the body of Christ.[49]

To find country folk, who were very probably illiterate, reciting Latin turns of phrase, might come as a surprise. Could the court clerk have set down in Latin what the suspects said in Provençal? I do not think so. We should bear in mind that, expected as they were to attend the parish church on Sundays and feast-days, that is between eighty and one hundred days a year, the parishioners ended up knowing whole lengths of Latin text by heart, and first and foremost the official prayers. They had, after all, retained another formula, equally in Latin, that the barbes pronounced to open the "synagogue": "quis habet, habeat, et quis tenet, teneat." With such considerations on the barbes' power, we are touching on a crucial aspect, for it constitutes both the cause of their rejection of the Roman clergy with all their rules and regulations, as well as the justification of the Waldensians' existence.

Next in line comes the prohibition of swearing (mentioned 40 times), nearly always accompanied by that of lying (34), with oaths and falsehood described in places as "mortal sins." The most forthcoming on this point is perhaps Pierre Elvotet: "To swear or to lie, in whatever case it may be, is a mortal sin, that is why one must never affirm something but say: I believe so or I don't believe so or I think so or I don't think so."[50] Here we find the Waldensians' two major interdicts ever since the beginning.

Recurring 44 times, another formula, again a stereotyped one, evidently marked the Waldensians' memories: "It is as good to pray at home as to pray in church," sometimes with slight variations: "cowshed" replaces "home"; "temple" instead of "church;" some do not say "as good" but "better". Equally frequently (42 occurrences), expressed in very similar terms each time, the Waldensians maintain that "all waters are holy", or again that "rain water is as blessed as that in church." The formula used by Jacques Lantelme is a frequent one:

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[49] *Ibid.*, f° 234, December 12, 1487.
[50] *Ibid.*, f° 133.

"Rain water is as good as holy water because all water has been blessed by God."[51] Along the same lines, another formula turns up dozens of times: "It is as well to be buried in a field as in a cemetery, God blessed all the waters which is why there is no need to worry more about holy water than about rain water."[52] In such cases, we encounter a real "desacralization" of various elements in space and time (the church, the cemetery, water; Saturdays, feast days, vigils, Lent), or at the very least a refusal of excessive sacralization, what we might call "secularization" ahead of its time, a certain "laicization" in the sense of "declericalizing", which was an original stand indeed, and rare in the society of the times.

We can round off this survey by the less frequently mentioned aspects: thirteen Waldensians declaring that "to denounce a member of the sect is an irremissible sin;" five declarations specifying that sins of the flesh are not great sins; four suspects saying that one should not say *Ave Maria*, which is a salutation, but only the Lord's Prayer.[53] Other, rarer affirmations can be found, such as "Do not do unto others what you would not be done to you."[54] The same dossier contains the references to the "synagogues" that we discussed above, and which it would be pointless to evoke anew.

Thus we have a round view of how the Waldensians spoke of what the barbes had taught them. Reconstituting the preachers' words via the followers' declarations may appear a rather piecemeal way of going about things. To get a better idea of the continuity and conviction in the depositions, we shall read that of Martin Belliard of Pragelato. Prompted by his father, he had already acknowledged confessing for the first time twenty-two years previously and several times again since then. The interrogatory continues as follows:

> What did the barbes tell him?
> – That they lead apostolic lives and the Church of God is with them and that outside their sect, there is no salvation. And if someone, in whatever case, pollutes himself [*corrumptus*], it is an irremissible sin, which is why they must use women instead because it is not a great sin.

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[51] *Ibid.*, f° 116 v°.
[52] *Ibid.*, f° 133.
[53] Jean Pastor, for example, from Traverses, Pragelato, December 4, 1487: *Ave Maria* is not prescribed, only the Lord's Prayer, (*ibid.*, f° 195 v°).
[54] Guillaume Richiod, for example, from Granges, Mentoulles, December 4, 1487: "Pariter quod non facias aliis, quid tibi fieri non vis" (*ibid.*, f° 194).

> If the barbes said that certain women should be avoided,
> – Yes, that is to say sisters and germane cousins but for others, at a lesser degree, that he should not worry.
>
> If they begin Lent on Wednesday, as is customary,
> – No, on Monday according to the Ambrosian mode because those four days are not worth troubling over. Similarly, there is no need for concern over vigils and saints' feast days because you should pray to God alone. Indulgences and ecclesiastical censures are worthless and must not be respected. To swear or lie in whatever case it might be is a mortal sin. There is no purgatory; that is why you must not pray for the dead. To denounce someone of the sect is an unatonable sin. Rainwater is as good as holy water. You need not worry about being buried in a field or a profane place rather than a cemetery. It is as good to pray in a cowshed as in a temple.[55]

One should not of course lose sight of the extremely suppressive context in which the suspects were speaking, vulnerably placed as they were before the examining magistrate. Yet this actually makes the admissions all the more valuable, particularly in view of the fact that not only are the questions asked very open but also, that the Waldensians willingly digress from them. All things considered, the barbes' message, such as we have examined it elsewhere, would appear to have been admirably passed on. It is worth noting that the Waldensians do not engage in obscure, theoretical definitions; on the contrary, what they say tends to concern an array of moral, concrete positions rather than theological strictures and principles. But there again, this was precisely what emerged too from the barbes' teaching as revealed by the pious texts preserved in the Waldensian manuscripts.

The barbes would thus seem to have been good pedagogues, and the essential elements of their message were indeed passed on: to love God alone, to withhold from swearing, not to lie, to trust the barbes who lived like apostles, to be wary of Roman clerics whose lifestyle was unworthy, who were more greedy than zealous, who had invented a whole gamut of practices (purgatory, the cult of the dead with an array of masses and suffrages, the cult of saints with statues and pilgrimages, holy water), as a source of material advantages for themselves rather than in the spiritual interests of the faithful.[56]

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[55] *Ibid.*, f° 134–134 v°, November 17, 1487.

[56] In the words of Peyronette, of Beauregard, in 1494: "The above-named priests had themselves imagined and invented that there was a purgatory in the other world so that, by the chants and prayers sung for the deceased, they might acquire great goods, by which means they kept up their bad life," (E. Arnaud, *Mémoires historiques, op. cit.*, p. 37).

References to the Gospel are often made, as a measure of truth, by which to gauge the authenticity of the message. From this point of view, the Waldensians had assimilated perfectly the founding principle of the dissent which was biblical, and more precisely evangelical: everything that has been added to the Word must be proscribed.

What remains to be seen is how their teaching fared in practice, or, to put it differently, how the Waldensians applied what they had been taught in their everyday lives. We have already considered the issue above, to observe that the Waldensians did not necessarily live by the principles of their dissent. For a start, we know that they swore oaths. The 1487 proceedings used here are formal proof of the matter, for every cross-examination begins by the suspect taking an oath on the Gospels as was required, an act duly noted down by the court clerk. This in itself is striking: forty of the Waldensians questioned in autumn 1487 declared that it was forbidden to swear but did so under oath. Admittedly, when they reply to the specific question, they set forth the doctrinal points and Waldensian practice as taught by the barbes. Strictly speaking, these are not their own beliefs. But it is equally clear that they believe in them too, since each suspect "humbly asks for absolution" at the end of the interrogatory. Along similar lines, we have already seen a number of Waldensians speaking about confession to barbes and declaring that they truly believed the barbes had the power to absolve and they truly believed they were forgiven.

The Followers' Impressions

What emerges loud and clear from the series of testimonies is the great esteem every single Waldensian had for the barbes. They are strikingly unanimous in presenting a very flattering picture that contrasts all the more with that of the pope, the prelates and, more generally, the priests of the Church of Rome. We might wonder what exactly this hinged on, particularly if we compare their words with testimonies by Catholic congregations about ecclesiasts in general, and more particularly the parish priests who assured pastoral services in the same era. The fact is all the more surprising and noteworthy coming over as it does during depositions made before a tribunal. Well aware of how the authorities were concerned to hunt down the barbes, the Waldensians might easily have laid the blame on them, playing up their responsibility, for example by claiming that they had been led

astray by deceivers. No testimony adopts such a line. It is even incredible that this should be so—never a qualm, not a word of criticism, not even a reservation. We should bear in mind, for example, that 311 of the 366 suspects questioned in the Alps in 1487–1488 admit confessing to a barbe, an admission that amounts to acknowledging membership of the sect. The only way to escape condemnation was to claim they had been deceived. No one chose to do so.

All those who speak of their preachers do so in terms of warm admiration that say much about the relations they had with them. They describe their barbes as "good" men, "saints", men who lead apostolic lives, men of Christ, of poverty. The way François Gralier of Pourrières in the parish of Usseaux sums them up is representative of what his co-religionists thought: "the barbes live just, holy lives according to the rules and the law."[57] To this, we can add the opinion of Pierre Blanc, of Fenestrelle. The inquisitor asked him if he had believed in these errors, to which he replied, "Yes, because he believed these were good men, just and holy and they told him comprehensible [*ad intelligendum*] things."[58] This last remark underlines the barbes' pedagogical scruples, but also draws attention to the relative simplicity of the message they were putting over, which the Waldensians, simple country folk, illiterate as they were, had no difficulty understanding and retaining. This in itself can account for the fact that so many Waldensians were capable of expressing and accounting for their beliefs.

As we have seen, the Waldensians took the apostolic lives led by their barbes as proof that they spoke the truth, just as, contrariwise, it proved the priests who lived unworthy lives had no power. Again, Monet Rey gives the most precise explanation of the matter in 1494:

> The ecclesiasts had and possessed too great wealth and more goods than they needed; it was for that reason that they committed many bad actions; that some, as a result of this excess and this abundance of goods, were usurers, proud and filled with avarice; that others lived too freely and in a dishonest way, openly keeping women with bad lives in their houses: thus giving a bad example to the people; similarly, that the said priests, as a result of their wicked lives, had no greater power of absolution than the doctors or preachers of this sect . . ."[59]

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[57] *Ibid.*, f° 272 v°, January 8, 1488.
[58] *Ibid.*, f° 255 v°, January 9, 1488.
[59] E. Arnaud, *Mémoires historiques, op. cit.*, p. 29.

The crucial question indeed remains the same: do the barbes or the priests hold legitimate power or not? In reply to the question, "From whom do the Waldensian barbes hold their power?", Pons Brunet of Freissinières says he does not know.[60] Many others, as we have seen, explain it simply by the lives they lead. Few are those capable of explaining the origin of the barbes' power. Peyronette from Beauregard, however, can do so:

> The preachers or masters of this sect and the priests or people of the Church once were accustomed to being one and the same order and rule; but when the people of the Church wanted to turn to avarice and the vanities of this world, the preachers, for their part, remained in poverty; in this way a schism grew between them and they became enemies and, since the number of preachers and other just men who ordered the sect was small and widespread, it was thus necessary for them to appear in secret, as Christ had done with his apostles, because if the preachers did not go with precaution and in secret, they feared to meet with disfavour and to be mistreated by the others.[61]

In this way, the apostolic tradition of the barbes was proven, so that they were no longer "dissenters" or "sectarians" but the faithful successors of Christ and the apostles, the guardians of the first depositary of the faith, before the Christian message was deflected and deformed.

The high opinion held of the barbes, along with the strict distinction that came to be made between them and the followers within the community, might incline us to wonder whether the Waldensians did not actually take them for clerics. Certain reflections or revelations made by Waldensians that we have encountered along the way could back up such an inquiry. As a fact, the barbes were compared to clerics in two particular situations. First, concerning absolution, which the barbes administered "in the manner of priests", "as the priest does", "as priests do," and confession. The second occasion when barbes appear to have been assimilated with the clergy is when they are associated with books, which, in the society of the day, gave a man his rank. This is most often formulated as follows: "they carry books, like clerics" or again, "as if they were ecclesiasts."[62] Does this

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[60] E. Arnaud, *Mémoires historiques*, *op. cit.*, p. 146.
[61] E. Arnaud, *Mémoires historiques*, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
[62] See, for example, the declaration by Marguerite: Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4350, f° 166 v°, November 1487.

mean the Waldensians took their barbes for ecclesiasts? Or at least did the barbes maintain a certain ambiguity concerning their status, perhaps in view of bolstering their prestige in the eyes of their flocks?

Strictly speaking, the last-quoted expression makes a hypothetical comparison, thus clearly establishing that the barbes were not clerics, but they carried books as if they were. Others put it more clearly still. Poncet Brunet, of Freissinières, states precisely: "The said Waldensian barbes are laymen and dress in coarse cloth." Once again, the two Waldensians from the Valentinois, Monet Rey and Peyronette express matters best of all in 1494, in almost identical terms: "The masters or preachers themselves, although they were laymen, had as great a power as these same priests." In other words, there were no doubts at all in the Waldensians' minds: the barbes were not ecclesiasts, nor did they seek to pass themselves off as such.[63] The authority they exercised over their flocks would not appear to have been reduced for all that; the followers acknowledged them without a doubt and hid them in their homes, confessing to them and, on a more general level, providing for their material needs.

It is strikingly clear that in such conditions, the barbes really constituted the framework of the community and the followers took it to heart to look after them and protect them; only their courageous, effective support can account for the longevity of the Waldensian dissent of which the barbes were not only the symbol but the very condition of its unity and permanence.

[63] Poncet Brunet: J. Chevalier, *Mémoire historique . . ., op. cit.*, p. 146; Monet Rey and Peyronette: E. Arnaud, *Mémoires historiques, op. cit.*, pp. 29 and 36.

CHAPTER NINE

TWILIGHT

He went out to meditate in the field at the eventide
Genesis 25, 63

The religious dissents of the middle ages were hounded out of existence, for the most part, by the concerted efforts of the Church and the State, coordinating judicial proceedings and persecution in a similar fashion right across Europe. It would be perfectly logical to assume that the same was true of the Waldensians. As we have seen, the authorities, guardians that they were of orthodoxy and public order, treated them no less cruelly than other movements. Be this as it may, for over three centuries the Poor of Lyons survived, and they alone arrived at the brink of Modern Time, meaning the sixteenth century, conventionally marking the age of humanism and the Renaissance. What is more, while the Waldensian dissent did indeed disappear in that era, which was equally that of the Reformation, it was not because their persecutors' blows finally subdued them, but because they made the deliberate decision to do so.

To try and understand their decision, which is difficult to fathom, we need to bear in mind that two worlds, two cultures, were to confront each other and discover each other's existence. On the one hand was the Waldensian community, already riven by an identity crisis. Several issues were becoming contentious. First, their small numbers, which did not always seem a gauge of their authenticity. Angelin Palon, of Freissinières, in his depostion made in 1488, stated that he had spoken to the barbes as follows: "We err in our faith because there are so few of us in our sect. . . . They answered, 'Our Lord, Jesus Christ was alone'."[1] Second, the question of dissimulation; this can be heard in the declaration by Catherine, from Fribourg, in 1430, whom we have already encountered: "We should not preach in secret and in hidden places because it is forbidden, and the Holy

[1] Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4351, f° 114 v°, March 21, 1488.

Apostles were martyrised for preaching openly."[2] This was an argument the inquisitors promptly picked up on, as we see in the dialogue between the Dominican Jean de Roma and Pierre Griot in 1532:

> Asked if it is not wrong to teach them to preach secretly and in private and with this, a peculiar doctrine,
> – Says and replies that it is wrong to hide the truth . . .
> So why are they ashamed to preach their doctrine in public,
> – Says and replies that it is by fear, so he believes;
> Asked whether in this case their doctrine is good or bad;
> – Says and replies that they do believe it to be good;
> Asked if this fear is not contrary to the Holy Scriptures,
> – Says that it is.[3]

The third source of ill-ease was the contradiction that the Waldensians maintained between principles based on the Holy Scriptures to which they adhered in theory, but which, in practice, they could not apply. Facing this reticent, troubled community towered the world of the Reformation, learned, self-assured and triumphant, irrespective of the hostility it inspired.

We know, from the 1530 Morel report in particular, that the Waldensians had first established contacts with the Reformers some years before. Who could have imagined that Luther's act of protest in Wittenberg could trigger off an outcry that would become a movement of social and religious disobedience between 1517 and 1520? When on June 15, 1520, pope Leo X issued the bull *Exsurge Domine* excommunicating Martin Luther, he believed he had scotched the affair. Yet it was in 1520, with the publication of Luther's four major works, that the movement truly gained momentum. The initial spark of inspiration which originated in a friary did not stop at the hearths of Saxony or even Germany but flared up until it threatened to engulf the whole continent. In the 1520s, and even more in the 1530s, the works of Martin Luther were printed, translated and circulated throughout Europe.

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[2] See above, ch. 3, note 43.
[3] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur*, Aix-en-Provence, Edisud, 1979, pp. 134–135.

First Contacts with the Reformation

Even beyond the Germanic countries, the Reformation touched populations everywhere, some of whom were merely interested, others wholeheartedly attracted. The Poor of Lyons were more likely than some to be swayed by the powerful call for religious reform. We can easily understand the interest the Reformation held for them if we consider the three founding pillars of Reformist theology: justification by faith alone (*sola fide*), the priesthood of all believers, by which every person was entitled to examine the Holy Scriptures for himself, and the infallibility of the Bible alone (*sola Scriptura*). The last two points were an exact echo of Vaudès' stand four centuries before. They were also fully in keeping with the tradition of Waldensian thought and practices as we have seen in the last two chapters. The two religious sensibilities thus shared a desire to engage fervently in the Word of God. Vaudès' movement had stayed the course as best it could but had also tempered its demands over the centuries. The inspiration behind the Reformation was fresh and its initial impetus was flourishing. Even before the new Reformist trend had won over the northern Germanic countries, the Brothers felt the need to get to know it better.

The barbes' inquiries were justified. Did Luther, who was soon followed by a number of other evangelical apostles, really have anything new to say? How did his challenge differ from what the Poor of Lyons had been maintaining in word and deed for centuries? The very touchstone of Waldensian thought was, after all, the primacy of the Holy Scriptures and the Word of God made accessible to all by translation and preaching. However, the barbes were bewildered to read the works by the Wittenberg Reformer and learn of some of his positions. Luther's reading of the Bible, for instance, did not correspond to theirs. While he, as a good doctor of Theology, explained the various levels of interpretation, the Waldensians limited themselves to a literal reading, refusing any interpretation. More serious still for them was the principle of *sola fides*, at the very core of Lutheran thought, for the Brothers believed firmly that it was possible to aid one's own salvation, remaining attached to a whole series of rites and practices. The only solution was to make contact with the Reformers and question them, thereby acquiring better knowledge of them so as to make up their minds afterwards.

The first indication of contact between Luther and the Poor of Lyons dates back to 1523, when the Reformer wrote to the duke of Savoy to ask him to protect the "Waldensians" in Piedmont who were his subjects. Otherwise, the few occasions on which he refers to them in his writings mostly concern Bohemia. In his letters, he touches on the Waldensian question three times, but only in passing, with the exception of a letter addressed in 1535 to "Benedict Güb, from Boleslav, and to the Waldensian Brothers in Bohemia". In this we learn that he and Philip Melanchthon had received two emissaries sent by the Czechs. He states that they were delighted to learn that children were baptised in Bohemia—which must be understood in the context of violent clashes with the Anabaptists—and that they, like the Reformers themselves, recognised the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. Were the envoys really Waldensians? Elsewhere, Luther refers more harshly to "Picards" who would appear to have been Poor of Lyons, for this was another name by which they were sometimes known.[4] In other words, the Reformer's relations with them were extremely limited. The barbes contacted the Reformers in 1526, although little is known about it. According to the historians Gerolamo Miolo in the sixteenth century and Pierre Gilles in the seventeenth century, the synod held in that year in Laux in the Cluson valley in Piedmont brought together 140 barbes. The assembly sent two of them, Guido from Calabria and Martin Gonin from Angrogna, to Switzerland and Germany to gather information.[5] Gilles specifies that Gonin returned from Switzerland "bearing a quantity of printed books of the Religion".[6] Henceforth, the better educated barbes at least could become acquainted with Reformist thought in Latin, while the others could do so in the popular dialect. It was during the same mission that they made contact with Guillaume Farel, who made it his task to establish and then maintain links between the Poor of Lyons and the Reformation. His Dauphinois origins meant he was ideally suited to the purpose, as did his acquaintance

[4] Letter from Luther to the Duke of Savoy, September 7, 1523: G. Jalla, *Storia della Riforma in Piemonte*, Firenze, Claudiana, 1914, reprints Torino, Claudiana, 1982, pp. 15–19; *Luthers Werke*, Weimarer Ausgabe, 1883 sq., v. 2, p. 560; v. 7, p. 177; v. 9, p. 383.

[5] G. Miolo, *Historia breve & vera de gl'affari de i Valdesi delle Valli*, Torino, Claudiana, 1971, p. 100; P. Gilles, *Histoire ecclésiastique des Églises vaudoises . . .*, Genève, 1644; reedit. Pignerol, 1881, 2 v., v. 1, pp. 26, 47.

[6] P. Gilles, *ibid.*, p. 47.

with the Romance dialect. Farel's opinions, however, were more inflexible than Luther's, and as a result he was further removed from the barbes and their traditions. Nothing else is known about the spread of Reformist ideas in the Waldensian community in the second decade of the sixteenth century. Things changed, however, in the 1530s.

An Identity Crisis

If the Poor of Lyons, and more particularly the preachers and their leaders, were so strongly attracted by Reformist tendencies, it was because the new trends coincided with an era during which, for some decades already no doubt, the Waldensians had been examining themselves; trouble and doubt had filtered through their ranks, until what amounted to an identity crisis had taken hold of the community as a whole. This is not just a hypothesis based on an *a posteriori* analysis of later events but a situation clearly evoked in the 1530 Morel report. It becomes clear, as we read it, how hesitant the barbes had become over their beliefs, to the extent that they were seized by the need both to reflect and to examine their consciences collectively. Their thoughts seem to run as follows: we alone have conserved, defended and passed on since our beginnings—which they sometimes dated as far back as apostolic times, as we know—the truth based on the Gospel, but have we read the divine Word correctly? Their perplexity over the matter was further amplified by their differences with the Reformist position. The questions they appear to be asking are the following: What if, for centuries, we have been mistaken and have led our people astray? Was evangelism, biblical literalism, the true path to salvation?

The question was crucial, particularly as it implicitly acknowledged their weakness. We saw above that the barbes were perfectly aware of the double game they were leading. Fear had forced them to dissimulate their preaching mission; the believers, meanwhile, had managed to conceal their convictions to such an extent that a real contradiction had developed between the principles they announced, deriving from their literal reading of the Gospel, and the ways in which they applied them in their daily lives. If it had proved impossible to respect what they believed in theory to be the will of God, was it because of human weakness, persecution or as a result of

misreading the Bible? Who could answer the question better than these new prophets who, like Vaudès himself, were looking fixedly to the hereafter, inspired in thought and deed by the Word of God? These men, however, were wholly, or at best largely, unaware of the existence of the Poor of Lyons whose traditions had been kept alive by suffering. Furthermore, Luther, Melanchthon, Zwingli, Lambert, Bucer, Oecolampadius, Haller and later Calvin and the majority of Reformers were former clerics and also urban dwellers, grounded in Latin and the scholastic methods of university training. They had nothing in common with the Waldensians and their deliberate, organised simplicity. What could they make of the uncouth preachers serving a rural community? The question is all the more pertinent if we recall that the Reformers, as men of the times, maintained a very hierarchical vision of society. Their aim was to convert sovereigns and their courtiers, believing this to be the finest and easiest way to win popular support for their evangelical cause. Seen from this angle, what interest could the Poor of Lyons possibly hold for them?

The barbes were directed to Bucer and Oecolampadius, the Reformers of Strasbourg and Basel; their mission is touching in a sense, bearing witness to their courage and intelligence. They could have started from their solid tradition dating back many hundreds of years, spoken superciliously of the persecutions that continued to be organised against them, seeking to impress the new preachers or even attempt to integrate the new dissenters into their diaspora, or at the very least they could have ignored them disdainfully. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Poor of Lyons put themselves into question and addressed the Reformers with endearing humility. The Reformers, whose origins and learning we have already alluded to, were certainly in the ascendant and must have been esteemed by the barbes not only for their culture, religious and otherwise, but also for their self-assurance resulting from their solid theological training. Even the most learned barbes, as was the case for Georges Morel and Pierre Masson, were of no great weight compared to these men of God who were also humanists. Furthermore, the Reformation had been victorious in several states. The Poor of Lyons must have found this evangelical victory compelling after the centuries of suffering they had endured. Discussions were thus set up between the representatives of two cultural spheres who were both so different they were nearly in opposition, yet so similar that they resembled unequal brothers. The ensuing dialogues are remarkable.

Let us set the situation in context. At the 1530 synod, apparently held in Mérindol in Provence, the assembled barbes decided to send out two of their preachers, chosen from the most educated among them, capable of understanding Latin, the only common language possible between the Germanic Reformers and the Romance-speaking Poor of Lyons, on a new, more specialised mission than that of 1526. Morel and Masson thus set out and met Oecolampadius in Basel and Bucer in Strasbourg with whom they exchanged ideas concerning their respective positions. On their return, Pierre Masson was captured, but Georges Morel returned to Provence and translated the debates from Latin into Romance and wrote an account of them for his colleagues. This document in two parts, Latin and Romance, is now in Trinity College Library, Dublin and the Latin text has been published by Valdo Vinay.[7] Besides an exchange of letters, it contains the questions [*peticions*] the barbes asked the Reformers, followed by their individual replies. 110 folios of the manuscript concern this essential material, the value of which is inestimable. It evokes all the contentious issues, whether in terms of doctrine or practice. The tone is clearly sincere and candid. A master was speaking of his community, presenting it to his listeners who were not even aware the Poor of Lyons existed. For this reason, the barbes' list of questions, organised by Morel, respect the following pattern: these are our beliefs, these are our practices, we ask your opinion on them. The delegates, who had read Erasmus and Luther, sought precisions, explanations and confrontations related to their Bible readings.

To Oecolampadius, Morel and Masson write:

> It is our hope and our confident belief that the Holy Spirit will speak to us through you and enlighten us over numerous things which, because of our ignorance and our laziness, we doubt and also we do not know at all which is, I strongly fear, much to the detriment of us and our people whom we teach in a manner that is hardly competent.[8]

The questions first present the company of barbes, the support and structure of the community, at some length. It thus offers a wealth of information about the college of preachers, to which we referred frequently above. There follows a reminder of their traditional refusal

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[7] V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede dei valdesi riformati*, Torino, Claudiana, 1975 (Latin text and translation into Italian); letter from the two barbes to Oecolampadius: pp. 36–50; Oecolampadius' first reply: pp. 52–62; second reply: pp. 64–68; letter from the two barbes to Bucer: p. 72; Bucer's reply: pp. 74–116.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

to swear oaths, to kill and to bear judgement. In theological terms, their position is in many respects close to the doctrine of the Roman Church. They recognise "free will," in other words, that "good works" contributed to their salvation or condemnation in the hereafter. They retain more than two sacraments. As far as devotions are concerned, however, they had long since distanced themselves from Roman practices. They do not accept the cult of the Virgin and other saints, purgatory, suffrages for the dead, vigils (on the eve of holy days), holy water, mass, abstinence (from meat and fats on prescribed days) and indulgences. They hold the Bible alone as their reference on matters of faith and moral doctrine and read it literally. Such is the picture of their community as presented by the two barbes.

Dialogue and Debate

Questions are being addressed indirectly to the Strasbourg Reformer from beginning to end of the barbes' letter, but eleven direct questions are put to him concerning matters "which are most ambiguous and obscure for us."[9] These emphasise the barbes' particular concerns. The questions troubling them and which they addressed directly to the Reformers were as follows:

1. Should ranks of dignity be established amongst ministers of the Word, such as episcopacy, presbytery and deaconry?
2. Had God ordered authorities or magistrates to sentence murderers, thieves and delinquents to death or other punishments by which they might atone for their crimes?
3. Are civil laws and others invented by men valid in the eyes of God?
4. Is it licit to advise members of the community to kill false brethren who betray them and deliver the barbes to representatives of the Antichrist?
5. Is it licit for someone to take back for himself those essential goods required for his survival which have been unjustly taken; is it licit for believers to go to law?
6. Should the inheritance of children who die intestate go to their mothers; if the mother then remarries, should the sons of the second husband inherit?

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[9] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

7. Is everything added to capital usury? Is all trade which earns money without labour sinful? Is every oath a mortal sin?
8. Are the doctrines of original, venial and mortal sins, and invincible and wilful ignorance valid?
9. Is it licit to weep for the dead?
10. Are all children, from any origin, who are not yet capable of reasoning, saved by the grace of God and the passion of Christ? And conversely, are all those capable of reasoning who do not have faith in Christ condemned?
11. Must young people who seek and desire to live in celibacy take vows? Can marriage lawfully be contracted between blood relations of any degree, other than those evoked in Leviticus 18?

It is clear from this list that the Poor of Lyons' concerns bore upon concrete aspects of their practical life and difficulties resulting from their traditional biblicism. The most sensitive issue, however, at the root of the barbes' disquiet, arose over their doubts about the Reformers' double position on free will and predestination. The debate between Catholics and Reformers over this point was increasingly impassioned. The question was essential: can man aid his own salvation? Or, put another way, has he been predestined by God to salvation or damnation, making human will and human action powerless to alter God's will or to change his destiny? In 1524 Erasmus had published *Discourse on Free Will* [*De libero arbitrio*] to which Luther had replied sharply the following year with *The Will in Bondage* [*De servo arbitrio*]. The debate is, of course, at the very heart of the Reformation. It was also the main stumbling block for the Poor of Lyons, who, as we have already seen, had traditionally set a high value on works, that is to say the whole repertoire of practices and pious rituals that might help to gain salvation. For this reason, Morel and Masson touch on the heart of the debate after the eleven questions. Although the passage is long, it is worth quoting in full, for it gives a vivid notion of the perplexity in which they were living:

> Furthermore, nothing troubles our weakness, due, I admit, to our ignorance, more than what I have heard and read in Luther on free will and divine predestination. Indeed, we believe that God instils into each person a certain natural virtue, more to one and less to another however, as experience has clearly taught us that one man differs from the next and as the parable of the talents seems to indicate and as we have also seen by experience how in herbs, plants, stones and all other things there is its own natural energy put there by God, with which we can do much. So we believe that men can do something

> with the said virtue, especially when it is stimulated and incited by God as he himself has said: "Behold I stand at the door and knock" and he who will not open with this instilled and stimulated virtue will, in the end, be treated according to his works. Otherwise, if this be wrong, I do not see how we can understand so many affirmative and negative precepts, such as Erasmus discusses. As for predestination, we believe that long, long before the creation of heaven and earth, the Almighty had foreseen how many would be saved or damned, and this because of their own fault, because they would not obey and observe the commandments. But if everything happens by necessity, as Luther says, and if those predestined to eternal life cannot be damned and vice versa, since divine predestination cannot fail to be realised, then what is the point of so many writings and preachers and healers of the body? [10]

The barbes were profoundly troubled, for their attachment to good works was deeply rooted. They were ordained by the laying on of hands, they were celibate, they fasted, prayed and imposed penance on believers whose confessions they had received. Alms still had special value in the eyes of the Poor of Lyons. Morel draws on a verse from Ecclesiasticus 3: 30, which he quotes in *langue d'oc*: "*E enayma l'ayga steng lo fuoc, enaysi l'almona steng lo pecca*" [Water will quench a flaming fire; and alms maketh an atonement for sins.] Morel returns to this obviously crucial issue in his nineteenth *peticion* addressed to Bucer, with a multitude of quotations from the Holy Scriptures recommending good deeds so as to attain eternal salvation, drawn from Ecclesiasticus, Matthew, Luke, John, Acts, and Galatians. Morel concludes: "*De laqual cosa es vist esser segu cue la deo esser attribuy alcuna cosa a las obras*" [As a consequence of which, it appears some value is to be attributed to works]. The letter ends with an entreaty: "I beg that you be so kind as to reply particularly to these points". The barbe sought an exegesis of the quoted texts and an indication of the biblical origins of the doctrine of justification by faith. In other words, Luther had not convinced him or, in all likelihood, his fellow barbes.

Oecolampadius's reply to the questions is short and succinct. His position is clear: he rejects free will as contrary to divine grace but not to the point of concluding that sin is necessary; he affirms predestination which is a mystery since God cannot be unjust. The reality he bids them to accept is that God alone can save; man alone is responsible for his damnation. Bucer proves more aware of the question's significance and his audience's deep-seated anxiety, for his

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[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 46–48, referring to Matt. 25, 14 (the parable of the talents) and Apoc. 3, 20.

answer covers thirteen hand-written pages. He replies by explaining the biblical passages which had been cited, considering a literal reading to be insufficient. Interpretation was, to his mind, the key to their spiritual meaning. He likewise concludes with a defence of predestination. On this essential aspect of Christian life, the Reformers took the opposite view to that cherished by the Poor of Lyons. In concrete terms, this led the Waldensians to re-examine practices established centuries before. The replies were brought back to the college of barbes and were most likely discussed at the 1531 synod. They very probably cast dismay upon the whole college, with some members demanding they remain faithful to the past, and others turning their backs on former times to embrace new ideas set to ensure the victory of the Gospel. In fact, nothing is known of the annual meeting following the delegates' return. On the other hand, we have a fair idea of what happened the year after.

A Synod in Turmoil

While we know very little about all the other annual meetings of the barbes, we are fortunate enough to have Pierre Griot's direct account of the 1532 synod. When he reached Lourmarin in Provence, where he stayed for a few days before being arrested by the inquisitor Jean de Roma, he was returning from the barbes' annual assembly. The young barbe, interrogated in November 1532, testified as follows: "Similarly they gathered this last year in Piedmont, in the Luserna valley, in a place called Le Serre, where there are but ten or twelve houses . . . And he who is speaking was this year in the said congregation."[11] We have no way of knowing how many members were present, nor where they were from. Pierre Griot, however, recalls certain figures amongst them. "The current four are called Louis, the eldest, another is called Etienne, another Daniel and the

[11] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur. Procès du barbe vaudois Pierre Griot par l'inquisiteur Jean de Roma (Apt, 1532)*, Aix-en-Provence, Edisud, 1979, p. 103. One difficulty remains outstanding, here, which is that traditionally, the date given for the synod of Chanforan is 1532. Yet questioned in this same year, speaking of the same synod, Pierre Griot says it was "cette année passée" i.e. this last year. Did the court clerk make a mistake? Should we understand it to mean this ongoing year since the synod is now over? He does go on to say, "that he had not been at the congregation before that year", and later "this present year, great clerics and doctors had been present at their congregation" (*ibid.*, p. 109).

fourth Luke." Furthermore, the most well known masters included "Jean, Laurent, Georges and Jeannon." These barbes remain particularly elusive for we do not even know their family names, but only their "religious" names. Certain historians have attempted to lift the veil of mystery, identifying them as Louis Callier, Daniel of Valence and Georges Morel but this is pure conjecture.

The young Griot was equally impressed by other participants he met at his first synod, such as guest speakers or listeners. He recalls, "this current year important clerics and doctors came to their congregation. The others included a black habit and a white habit; these were monks; two others were gentlemen from the region of Grenoble." During the following cross-examination, the inquisitor asked him "what these four disputants were called." Griot replied: "The gentlemen were called Charles and Adam; the monks Augustine and Thomas." Asked to give their ages he specified that the "seculars", that is the laymen, were forty, as was Thomas; Augustine was about fifty. Who might these men have been, exterior to the community yet, on this exceptional occasion, admitted to their debates during their official gathering? As far as the monks are concerned, it is curious that these regulars should have come in their clerical outfits; the testimony is however clear on this point. Thomas has until now remained the more mysterious of the two; his white habit may indicate he was a Dominican. The second monk dressed in a black habit was possibly Augustine Maynard, the Piedmontais monk who preached for the Reformation in Cuneo. The laymen's identity is more certain. The man called Adam was in fact Antoine Saunier who had adopted the pseudonym, as a letter he wrote on November 5, 1532 confirms, signed "your Adam."[12] As for Charles, it would appear that he was really Guillaume Farel, although as far as I know, he never used this name. In any case, he was a gentlemen from the Dauphiné, aged 43 at the time. If it is indeed Farel, it comes as no surprise to find him at the barbes' assembly for he was perhaps the one man in the Reformist world to appreciate what the Waldensians' evolving attitude to the Reformation implied, and what it cost them.

As we have already seen, Farel represented the most rigorous trend in Reformist thought, that which was most opposed to the ancestral

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[12] A.-L. Herminjard, *Correspondance des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française*, Genève-Paris, 1866–1897, 9 v., reprints Nieuwkoop/B. de Graaf, 9 v., 1965–1966, v. 2, pp. 448–449.

ideas and practices of the Poor of Lyons. Discussions at the assembly looked set to be agitated, for the situation was already strained. For some years, troubled, divided barbes had been wondering whether they ought to maintain their traditional positions or whether they would not be better advised to join the huge tide of the Reformation. The crucial point for what indeed proved a turbulent meeting was predictably the question of faith and works. Again, the best record is the account given by Pierre Griot, with details about how he remembered debates and how they arose, all noted down in court records in the vivid French of the sixteenth century:

> And a disputation was held between them about faith. The two monks said that faith alone was justification and the two others said that faith without works was dead. And on the contrary the monks said that works served no purpose for justification but were mere proofs of faith, and that works were just a superstition that had been invented and that God did not ask at all for these external works but only for man's heart. The monks also said, "You are more concerned and troubled by your ceremonies and external works than those in the Roman Church" as if he meant that it was merely a waste of time and a useless burden to pay attention to these works and that they did not please God at all, for it prevented men from labouring and from doing temporal works. To such an extent that after the disputations of the said monks and gentlemen, the barbes remained quite scandalised because of what the said barbes are accustomed to, who persuade their people not to drink or eat or do anything without first praying to God.
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> They were scandalised too because the said monks told them they should not serve God but with their hearts and not in external appearance since God did not ask for it. It thus appears that the said monks wished to make the world of the flesh into a world of the spirit. Moreover, the said monks and gentlemen disputed the sacrament of marriage. And since the said barbes promised poverty, chastity and obedience to God, the said monks said they were doing wrong to promise chastity and that they should all get married for St Paul said that he who teaches must be the husband of a single wife, and the same for the deacon. And so the said barbes were all scandalised, saying that it was not their custom to get married, and the others saying they were already old.[13]

The unique character and quality of the statement, with its naïve, lively tone and revealing details make up for its being quoted at such length. It is irreplaceable in spite of the problems it creates. According to

[13] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur*, *op. cit.*, pp. 108–109.

Pierre Griot, the monks were defending Reformist ideas more than Saunier and Farel were. Had he muddled their words? This was possibly the case, for elsewhere during his trial, it is clear he had not fully understood the nature of the debates. What stands out clearly here is how impassioned the dialogue was as two religious cultures wrangled over crucial questions. Where could it all lead? The Poor of Lyons could reject justification by faith alone and, thereby reject the Reformation altogether. On the other hand, they could renounce their own past, thereby turning their backs on what for four hundred years they had believed to be a faithful application of the Holy Scriptures, truly imitating the apostolic life, in intention at least if not in reality. The third, midway solution was to retain those elements related to their particular religious sensibility from both their own traditions and from the Reformation, and to reject the rest, a solution which amounted to introducing reform within the community of the Poor of Lyons. Pierre Griot gives not insight on this issue, but the Dublin manuscripts give us the answer.

Adhesion and Renunciation

The conclusions reached by the synod of Chanforan, near the hamlet of Le Serre, were drawn up in twenty articles, in fact incorrectly numbered, the text of which has also been published by Valdo Vinay.[14] It settled the differences between the Poor of Lyons and Reformers, or at least brought the debate between them to a close. Reference is made only to contentious issues; it is not a general statement or a profession of faith. Only three articles concern their faith; the others evoke matters of ecclesiastical discipline. The second conclusion, on faith and works, is guarded: "As for external works, which have not been forbidden by God, man can do them or not do them, according to the given conclusion, without sin." In short, they established a compromise by recognising that works were optional. On the contrary, the question of predestination, which had provoked questions, confusion and doubt amongst the barbes, was settled unequivocally in article nineteen: "All those who have been and will be saved were pre-elected before the creation of the world" and twenty: "Those chosen to be saved cannot failed to be saved . . . He who

[14] V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede . . ., op. cit.,* pp. 139–143.

establishes free will entirely denies predestination and divine grace." There is no midway solution here; it was the inflexible Reformist position that was adopted.

Similarly, as far as the sacraments were concerned, the Morel report had affirmed their belief in more than two, whereas the Chanforan declaration deliberately falls into line with the Reformist position: "On the question of sacraments, it is conclusive in the Scriptures that Christ only left two sacramental signs; one of these is baptism, the other the Eucharist." As far as the latter is concerned, which caused dissension even within the Reformation, it is worth noting that the barbes, far from adopting Luther's more moderate position (consubstantiation), adopted the Zwinglian line which was quite opposed to their traditional stand (presence of Christ in the gathering of believers), a position Guillaume Farel had presented in his 1525 work, *Summaire et briefve déclaration.* As Vinay underlines, the spiritual radicalism of these conclusions "obviously came not from Oecolampadius or Bucer but from Farel who had dominated the synod of Chanforan."[15]

On a doctrinal level, the changes proved radical. On a moral level, in terms of their daily practices, could the barbes maintain some part of their venerable tradition which had forged a sensibility across generations of believers and produced such astonishing masters? Was this what they wanted? Examining the other conclusions drawn up by the synod makes the answer clear. There is little point analysing each decision individually; it will suffice to highlight those related to practices traditionally honoured by the Poor of Lyons. Oaths are admitted; ministers are accorded the right to have private property; confession is rejected as are other pious practices such as prayers at set hours, prayers recited aloud, fasting on set days, the laying on of hands, kneeling and covering one's head. Establishing a virginal order is declared a "diabolical doctrine"; marriage is forbidden to no one; ministers of the Word are not to be transferred from one place to another. We can imagine how overwhelming such conclusions were. The Poor of Lyons were giving up what had been their particular spiritual essence, their common practices and their understanding of religious intelligence. Seen in this light, the occasion is astonishing in terms of dogma and moral principles, doctrine and practice.

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[15] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

The change of direction was further reinforced by what was truly a shift in ideology. We saw above how selective the Waldensians' reading of the Bible was, focusing particularly on books from the New Testament, namely Matthew, John, the canonical epistles and Paul's pastoral epistles. The Reformation, however, from Luther onwards, privileged other books, insisting particularly on Paul's more dogmatic writings such as the epistles to the Romans and the Galatians. The differences, which were not contradictions, in approach become apparent if we compare the Morel report and the Reformers' replies. Concerning texts of reference, the synod of Chanforan again opted to follow the line of the Reformation. The conclusions drawn up by the synod cite the New Testament no less than nineteen times to justify the decisions being made. Paul is quoted nine times, three times from Romans. The increasing importance given to Paul is innovatory in the barbes' culture. Did their new inclination for the apostle of the gentiles reflect a certain expediency, as Farel gained in influence? Or had the barbes really evolved so much over a few years, to the point of adopting a new reading of the Bible, acquiring another religious culture and adhering to a new theology of salvation that had been unknown to them in former times? Whatever the answer, it is clear that the barbes changed course quite radically. At Chanforan they renounced not only an essential part of the vision which had been perpetuated over centuries of dissent but also attitudes, behavioural patterns and rules on which their very lives had been based since Vaudès' first cry of protest.

How were such astounding decisions made? How did the barbes come to break with their past so abruptly? Nothing is known, of course, about the discussions and debates which had doubtless been taking place over the years, nor about the manner in which voting was organised during synods, the synod at Chanforan above all. One can surmise that every barbe voted and that motions were carried by the absolute majority of votes, according to the traditional formula of the *major et sanior pars* [greatest and soundest part]. Drawing on the manuscript of the conclusions in which it is stated that the assembly was held in the presence of all the ministers and "the people", certain historians have assumed this to mean decisions were made democratically, carried by the votes of all those present. Personally, I believe that only the barbes voted, and several reasons incline me to do so. First of all, society in those times reasoned in terms of hierarchy. Second, as we have already seen, the Poor of Lyons organised their community in harmony with the prevailing mentality. It

is most likely that other people present were only there as onlookers, at least when voting took place. Moreover, the formula may conceivably have been customary, like that used by the ancient Romans under the empire, even though it no longer corresponded to real practices, when decisions were made in the name of "*senatus populusque romanus*" [Senate and the people of Rome].

Whatever the case, the synod ended in turmoil. The discussions had been heated and intense. The barbes were not all of the same opinion and votes had certainly not been cast unanimously. Those who would not submit to majority rulings evoked their ancient customs, in the name of which they formed a sort of party of discontent. Two such recalcitrants, Daniel of Valence and Jean of Molines, even decided to travel to Bohemia so as to expose the situation, their view of it at least, to the Czech Brothers. They presented themselves as delegates sent by their fellow barbes, calling upon the German Brothers to witness the growing treason instigated by "certain Swiss who are either scoffing at or corrupting the Holy Scriptures." These were the terms used to describe Saunier and Farel. Their mission is documented by a letter signed by "the Brothers and ministers preaching the Gospel in Bohemia and Moravia" sent in return to their fellows in the west on June 25, 1533. The Czechs urged the barbes to be prudent, without taking sides over the heart of the debate.[16] The appeal addressed by the barbes to their Czech brethren shows that, while relations may have been distended, links could be consolidated between the eastern and western communities, particularly during critical or decisive periods. We do not know how the letter was received at the following synod held in Prali in 1533. It is certain, however, that the Chanforan conclusions were reasserted. In this way, the Poor of Lyons entered the vast movement of the Reformation, and more particularly the French-speaking Swiss trend, at least on an official scale as decided by their leaders, and as far as their theoretical declarations were concerned.

A French Bible

Another important decision made at Chanforan, not evoked in the conclusions but documented elsewhere, was to print the Bible. Such regard for the Holy Scriptures can come as no surprise, so ingrained

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 144–150.

was this attitude in the community of the Poor of Lyons. It was furthermore what they shared most in common with the Reformist world. Nor is there anything surprising about their choosing to benefit by the technological novelty of the printing press, which would enable documents to be diffused in greater numbers, more cheaply and more faithfully than had been the case for manuscripts previously used by the barbes. We therefore might expect them to have printed a manuscript text already available within the community, in other words a bible in the *langue d'oc* used in the western regions of the diaspora. This, however, was not the case. First, the versions used previously by the barbes were deemed inaccurate; it was decided that they should abandon the Church of Rome's traditional, authorised version in Latin, called the Vulgate, and establish a new version drawn from Hebrew and Greek texts. Second, they chose not to use Romance, the language formerly used in all Waldensian texts, but Latin and French. This is stated clearly in a letter, already mentioned above, from Antoine Saunier to Guillaume Farel, signed "your Adam", dated November 5, 1532, barely two months after the synod of Chanforan. On Saunier's advice, it had been settled that each page of the Bible should be divided into two, unequally wide columns, the wider of the two bearing the French text, the narrower bearing the Latin text in smaller script. Farel was entrusted with revising the text.

The work, which appeared in 1535, includes a preface entitled *Apologie du translateur* [Apologia of the Translator], attesting the origins of the undertaking. The opening lines, adapted in places to make them clearer, run as follows:

> I remember quite well how you Cusemeth [Farel] and you Almeutes [Saunier], led by the Spirit of God for those graces he has chosen to give you (concerning the understanding of the Holy Scriptures) set off three years ago to visit the Christian Churches, our good brothers. And when you had assembled (according to the custom) to confer and discuss the Holy Scriptures so that the people should always be instructed and taught in a holy way, between several fine speeches and saintly conferences, you declared that so many sects and heresies, troubles and tumults, were emerging in these times in the world, and this was because people did not know the Word of God; and seeing copies of the Old and New Testaments which were in our midst, written in the vernacular, copied out by hand in times long since past, we could not even remember when, which could only be of use to few people, you admonished all the other Brothers, for the honour of God and the good of all Christians who knew the French language, and so that

> they might rid themselves of any false doctrine that debases the truth, saying that it would be most expedient and necessary to purify the Bible in French according to the Hebrew and Greek. Hearing this, our Brothers agreed joyously and good-heartedly, doing their utmost in all ways so that this undertaking might be realised.[17]

The result did not always reflect decisions made previously, which may come as a surprise; the edition is even more astonishing. The work prepared by Pierre Robert, known as Olivétan, and printed by Pierre de Vingle, known as the Picard, in Neuchâtel on June 4, 1535, was not conceived along the lines of books traditionally used by the barbes. These had been pocket-sized manuscripts adapted to suit their itinerant preaching mission. The new publication was a large volume in folio made of 416 sheets of paper that would be difficult to transport, measuring 24.5 by 34 cm. Previously written in Provençal, it was now in French once the Latin had been eliminated. Had the barbes agreed to this? To help finance the enterprise, a collection amongst all the families of the diaspora was organised, which raised in at least five hundred golden ecus that were gathered and sent to the Swiss publisher. In other words, however much it may seem to diverge from the Poor of Lyons' former practices, the undertaking was financed and approved by the community.[18]

That the barbes should have abandoned manuscripts in favour of printed books is easy to understand; it is harder to explain why they agreed to give up their language. And for what reason did they agree to a bilingual edition in Latin and French, before finally settling on a version in French alone? We do not know how many Brothers used or even understood French, but French-speakers were in all likelihood a minority among the Brothers and a rarity among their followers. Having opted for the royal tongue, why also impose the cumbersome task of retranslating? It is conceivable that the barbes were urged on by Saunier and Farel until they felt they could not be content with the French version published by Lefèvre d'Etaples in 1530. But if a new version of the Bible was needed in French, why not translate the Waldensians' Bible in Romance? The decision not to do so denotes the huge pressure the Reformers brought to bear

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[17] *La Bible qui est toute la saincte escripture* . . ., Neuchâtel, Pierre de Vingle, 1535, f° III.

[18] On Olivétan's Bible, see: G. Casalis & B. Roussel (eds.), *Olivétan, traducteur de la Bible*, colloque de Noyon, 1985, Paris, Cerf, 1987.

on the college of preachers, whereby the barbes were convinced that all existing translations, their own included, were defective. These had all drawn on the Latin texts whereas, according to "Swiss" reasoning, new translation had to go back to the "original" Hebrew and Greek texts. Thus the barbes, and the Waldensian community in their wake, agreed to abandon the language spoken by their flocks, their venerable manuscripts and their clandestine celebrations; it was little short of a cultural revolution.

The format finally chosen for the Bible is more understandable if we recall that the assembly in Chanforan had also called for an end to ministers' itinerant missions and also to the double lives, which had traditionally been the lot of the believers. The in-folio edition made dissimulation impossible and transport difficult, thus favouring community celebrations rather than individual or even family bible-readings. Its material and practical appearance in fact also concealed an ecclesiological vision, a conception of the community and how it should celebrate its faith. The translated text itself bears this out. As we know, it was the work of Olivétan, Calvin's cousin. It is a well-known fact that the act of translation is never casual, rarely innocent and always revealing. As Bernard Roussel has shown, Olivétan apparently worked from a rabbinic Bible.[19] He played on three registers by which to work Reformist ideas into his translation. First, he included notes in the margins pointing out certain leanings or injunctions such as participating in ceremonies held by the Church of Rome for example. Second, he included an index which makes mention of notions such as that free will [*libre arbitre*] is not a biblical expression. Such a mention is really quite remarkable and original, setting down as it does an expression which does not figure in the work. The fact that the author omits to point out that the will in bondage [*serf arbitre*] is not a biblical reference either indicates how his approach is anything but fortuitous. The third register is more subtle, for he plays on the translation itself. When a word in Hebrew corresponds to more than one word in French, his choice is never neutral. The vocabulary he uses reflects the theology to which he subscribes. The term "priest" [*prêtre*] for example is rejected in favour of "sacrificer" [*sacrificateur*]. Olivétan's approach is iconoclastic: "chalice" [*calice*] becomes "hanap". He also tends to avoid any charis-

[19] *Ibid.*: B. Roussel, "Olivétan, 'corbeau enroué'. La traduction française d'Éphésiens 1 et Ésaïe 3", pp. 77–88.

matic inordinacy or possible "Adventist" excess. Roussel's conclusion sums the matter up well: "This translation increased the pressure the French group was putting on the Waldensians, with the intention of confirming their clear adhesion to the Rhenish and Swiss Reformation".

Olivétan's Bible, beyond considerations such as these, is a real landmark. To begin with, on a linguistic level, its importance as a sign of cultural change is two-sided. At a time when French was still very variable, it fixed a language that could be understood by all francophones; it was also the first Bible in French based on Hebrew and Greek. Furthermore, on a religious level, "the translation, which profited from Calvin's observations, was in the following century to be updated by the pastor Martin, then by Osterwald; in this modernized version it was used by French-speaking Protestants until new editions came out in the last century,"[20] as Léonard wrote in 1961. It was the edition in which generations of French Protestants read the Word of God, often in secret, particularly during the arduous Wilderness period from 1685 to 1787, when the "Religion Prétendue Reformée" was forbidden. Finally, Olivétan's Bible is a clear, concrete indication of the ascendancy the "Swiss" then had over the barbes, persuading them to agree to the new edition and to pay for it. We may however wonder whether events did not slip out of their control later.

The five hundred ecus paid for printing is too high a sum to cover the 1535 Bible alone. Gilmont estimates the sum as equivalent to the salary earned by a skilled worker in twenty years. Printing, however, would have taken ten fellow printers about four months. Does this mean the barbes were also being cheated, or tricked into financing other works without knowing it? The suggestion is abhorrent, bearing in mind that the collection which made possible the publication of the work, of which copies can still be found in numerous libraries, came from the sheer hard work and commitment of such pious, laborious peasants as the Poor of Lyons. The undertaking proved furthermore to be a complete failure in commercial terms, which can hardly come as a surprise. The Waldensians certainly did not rush out to buy it, having already paid for it a first time round. It was

[20] E. G. Léonard, *Histoire générale du protestantisme*, Paris, PUF, 1961, 3 v., v. 1, pp. 242–243.

also in French, and its considerable size made it highly awkward to handle. So in which way was this work, referred to by some historians as the "Waldensian" Bible, really theirs? They had paid for it, which was a feat in itself, but that was all. In 1561, twenty-five years after publication, a fair-sized stock of unsold volumes still remained in Neuchâtel, a certain number having already been transferred to Geneva. In 1670, nearly one hundred and fifty years later, the Genevan booksellers J-A. and S. de Tournes still listed it in their catalogue of available works.[21]

What we can be certain of, however, is that the order to print was not imposed by the Reformers but decided officially at the barbes' meeting in 1532. It is no less certain that absolutely everything in Olivétan's Bible runs counter to traditions formerly cherished by the Poor of Lyons. This both confirms and demonstrates how radically the barbes had evolved in terms of theology, moral issues and discipline. The most likely explanation is that the Reformers, Farel and Saunier especially, had a clear project in mind as far as the future of the Poor of Lyons was concerned. Discounting the original political bodies which embraced the Reformation, it was quite rare to have at the ready a coherent, homogeneous, organised movement that from the outset was committed to embracing the new path of salvation. How could the Reformers not use this microcosm to help them establish a new, more faithful version of the Holy Scriptures, to finance the cost of printing and, through them, to spread the Word of God amongst the French-speaking populations who had so far proved less eager to hear the true evangelical message? Last of all, it is more than likely that the barbes were somewhat overwhelmed by publishing concerns which were beyond them and which soon slipped from their control, if indeed they had ever felt inclined to supervise. They most probably had no idea of the consequences and repercussions that their decisions in Chanforan would have. They were certainly aware that they had instigated change, voting for transformations and new orientations. What they probably did not realise was that they had given up their own religious sensibility, their original culture and their ancestral past; in short, they had opted to lose their own identity, which amounted to putting an end to the existence of the barbes themselves.

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[21] J.-F. Gilmont, "La fabrication et la vente de la bible d'Olivétan", *Musée Neuchâtelois*, 3e série, v. 22, 1985, pp. 213–224.

CHAPTER TEN

AND THE BARBES WERE NO MORE . . .

In returning and rest shall ye be saved
Isaiah 30, 15

The barbes' assembly in Chanforan broke up and they set off again on their missions, two by two; they still had to put the newly adopted amendments into practice. This implied carrying out a task that had never before been envisaged throughout the whole of Waldensian history. More or less aware of the very real repercussions their decisions were going to have, they had to go out to the communities across the diaspora, not only to announce the proposed line of action to their followers, but also to ensure it was accepted; again, their role was to convince the flocks. How would they react? How to break the news that their sect, their clandestine, centuries-old dissent, was being turned into a Reformed Church?

From Decision to Practice

The decisions reached in Chanforan represented the position held by the majority countered only by a recalcitrant minority, as we saw in the move made by two barbes to enlist support from their Czech counterparts. Since their initiative led nowhere, we may wonder what subsequently became of the opposition. Did they attempt to set up a dissent within the dissent, out of faithfulness to their traditions? Or did they finally acquiesce to the changes? There is no clear answer, although certain signs seem to indicate that it took a very long time before they were all reconciled to the new horizons. Calvin disagreed with the barbes over the inevitable, central, sensitive question of faith and works, as he explained in a letter to a young Czech theologian Mattaeus Cervenka whom he had met in Strasbourg in 1540. Cervenka summed up the meeting as follows:

> First, we evoked the question of the Waldensian Brothers living in the Swiss lands and elsewhere. We brought up the subject of two of them,

> one bearing the name of Daniel, the other Jean. The two men had, not so long ago, visited their Brothers in Bohemia. Calvin declared that he too belonged to the Waldensians, although he had distanced himself since disagreeing with them over religious matters. He spoke to me at length explaining why the separation had come about, particularly emphasizing the fact that the Waldensians attribute too much to their own merits and do not accord sufficient importance to the article of justification by faith in Jesus Christ alone.[1]

They were still anchored to their venerable traditions. Eight years after the crucial synod, the barbes were no more than half-hearted champions of the Reformation. Bearing in mind how far-reaching certain changes were, such reluctance can come as no surprise.

If the barbes, who were in a position to bring about such changes, reacted in this way, what happened in the community as a whole? It is intriguing to wonder how the barbes were welcomed during their missionary rounds in 1532–1535, announcing the new measures to the families they visited: no more secret meetings, no more confessing to barbes; they were no longer to attend mass in the parish church. The double life was over; now they had to choose once and for all between Rome and the Reformation.

For the followers, Chanforan must have represented not so much a transmutation but a rupture, if not a betrayal. The new bearings must have been endlessly challenged and discussed, leaving no one impartial. Not that the preachers were abandoning their flocks altogether; their clandestine gatherings would henceforth be replaced by public worship, they were told, the community would be organised, their pastors would reside with them. But exactly when such changes would come about had not been decided. Moreover, if such new measures suited those countries which had hearkened to the Gospel, where the sovereigns had publicly opted for the Reformation, the same could hardly be said of the regions where the Poor of Lyons lived, where hostility persisted. Little trace remains of the community's initial confusion, easy as it might be to imagine.

There is one testimony evoking the reactions of the Poor of Lyons on learning about the new word of the Reformation, which is again to be found in Antoine Saunier's letter to Farel on November 5, 1532. Saunier and Olivétan had stayed on in Piedmont to preach. The let-

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[1] G. Gonnet & A. Molnar, *Les vaudois au moyen âge*, Torino, Claudiana, 1974, p. 317.

ter records how the Reformers instructed the ministers and people of the Waldensian valleys; how everyone, with the exception of a few people of rank [*primores*], willingly attended their secret sermons, some followers travelling by foot for two days to hear them speak. Does this imply the Waldensians rallied enthusiastically and massively to the Reformation? It is indeed possible that the density of their settlement in those valleys made them easier to win over. But this does not inform us about the welcome reserved for the new ideas in other regions of the diaspora, in the Dauphiné, Provence, Calabria and Apulia in particular. Nor is the matter entirely clear in Piedmont. When the barbes in favour of the new measures introduced the Reformers into the community, the believers may well have taken them for "new barbes". There is no reason to believe that Saunier's sermon really marked a new turning point; his word may well have caused no stir at all. With their "donatist" approach, the Poor of Lyons were capable of great versatility on occasion. The Reformers were good pedagogues and doubtless thought it better to introduce change gradually. If we leave aside Saunier's testimony, which, being unique, cannot be relied on entirely, to consider not what people said, but how they behaved, it is less change, but continuity that we encounter.

Again, it is the Waldensian marriage contracts and wills in Provence that enable us to gauge whether, in the years following Chanforan, there were any notable changes in people's behaviour, whether decisions made by those in command had any effect in practice, and when possible changes came about. Was the dogmatic rupture followed by immediate transformations in terms of the community's attitudes and mentality, or did adaptations come about in time? It may come as some surprise to find marriage contracts and wills being used as a measure of the changes. The taking of oaths is hardly revealing, for, as we saw above, despite the fact that oaths were officially forbidden in any circumstances, the Poor of Lyons swore on oath quite as much as their Roman Catholic counterparts. At the most, the Chanforan synod left them feeling freer, for the first conclusion stated, "It is licit for a Christian to take oaths." On certain matters, the Reformation thus brought an end to the double life they had been living which, widespread and customary as it was, must have troubled their consciences. On other matters it confirmed ancestral habits, such as the gift of bread to the poor after the burial service for example.

There were, however, practices which the Poor of Lyons had borrowed from their Roman Catholic contemporaries in order to resemble

them more closely and so protect their own identity, which had come in time to be as traditional in their community as they were for Catholics. It was customary for the Waldensians to order masses after their deaths to ensure the salvation of their souls; or to commend their souls not only to God but also to the Virgin Mary or other saints named in the introductory paragraphs of wills; or again when drawing up a marriage contract to promise that the ceremony would be concluded "before our holy mother, the Roman, catholic and apostolic Church." Such engagements profoundly shocked the Reformers, who believed they were thus dissimulating their faith, concealing the truth and making pacts with the Antichrist. To their minds, such diabolical practices had to stop. How did the Poor of Lyons living in Provence and elsewhere, who had officially joined the Reformation in 1532, react? After the 1530s, did they no longer request masses and entitle documents with Catholic declarations? Did they change headings formerly used in notarial documents, which had suddenly become repulsive in their eyes? The evidence we have speaks to the contrary. After 1532, the people in Provence blithely continued to get married before the holy Roman Church, to commend their souls to the saints and to request masses for the dead. And they continued to do so not merely in the 1530s and 1540s but even into the decade after. Research bearing this out has been made concerning the whole of Provence.[2] Covering a twenty-year period, it establishes beyond a doubt that, as so often happens, discrepancies are frequent between decisions and their application. At the most, the transfiguration of the community decreed by the leaders typically met with passive resistance from the people as a whole. In the long run, however, the law came into effect.

New Parishes

Old ways gradually dwindled and new trends emerged. The Poor of Lyons, or at least their leaders, began writing "confessions of faith", which was something of a novelty. The Protestants, on the other hand, had from their earliest years felt the need to draw up and announce publicly the articles of their faith, the first such declaration being

[2] See G. Audisio, *Une minorité en Provence. Les Vaudois du Luberon (1460–1560)*, Mérindol, A. E. V. H. L., 1984, pp. 410–419.

the famous Confession of Augsburg in 1530.[3] This was not just intended to confront Catholics, but also to define trends within the reformed states themselves, each tending to produce its own text. In the same year, Bucer prepared his Tetrapolitan Confession signed by Strasbourg, Constance, Menningen and Lindau; Zwingli published his *Fidei ratio*. In 1532, Oswald Myconius, who succeeded Oecolampadius, drew up the Confession of Basel; the Confession of Geneva appeared in 1536.[4] This practice, previously unknown to the Poor of Lyons, was taken up by them some time later. The first document of the kind to have survived from the Waldensian community has little in common with the equivalent reformist models. Signed by the "community of Cabrières", in other words Cabrières-d'Avignon in the Comtat Venaissin, it was addressed to the inquisitor Jean de Roma in 1533. The Waldensians from the region, troubled by the Dominican, wrote telling him that they were good Christians and sent as confirmation "the faith and belief that we hold and believe in, a confession which must not be made through violence or torture but in freedom of spirit according to the faith that God gave by his grace to each of us." The ensuing text is quite simply the Apostles' Creed, in French, transcribed in full. It is quite remarkable that when the Poor of Lyons felt compelled to make their faith public, which they had never done before, they found no better way than to present the traditional text of the Church, an approach radically different from that of the Protestants.[5]

In the years that followed, the Provençal communities issued three more confessions. The first, dated April 7, 1541, was addressed to the Parlement of Provence by the Mérindol community threatened with destruction after a court decree had been published to that effect the November before. It was published by the Genevan printer Jean Crespin in 1565.[6] The other two confessions are more difficult

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[3] The bibliography on the matter is rich indeed. Can usefully be consulted: *La confession d'Augsbourg*, Paris-Genève, Centurion-Labor et fides, 1979; and also E. Roerich, *Apologie de la Confession d'Augsbourg de Philippe Melanchthon*, Caen, E. Lanier, 1929 (texts in French); the texts are available in English in: B. J. Kidd (ed.), *Documents Illustrative of the Continental Reformation*, Oxford, 1911, pp. 259–289.

[4] See for example, E. Cameron, *The European Reformation*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991, pp. 252–254.

[5] Paris National Archives, J 851, n. 2, f° 30; edited by A.-L. Herminjard, *Correspondance des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française*, Genève-Paris, 1866–1897, 9 vol., reprints Nieuwkoop/B. de Graaf, 9 vol., 1965–1966, v. 7, pp. 466–468.

[6] J. Crespin, *Histoire des martyrs*, Toulouse, Société des livres religieux, 1885–1889, 3 v., v. 1, p. 396.

to date; one is probably from 1541 or 1542, the other from 1544. Both documents conform totally to the Protestant model. The central theme is that of justification by faith. They acknowledge only two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper, thus adhering faithfully both to Reformation tenets and to the position adopted at Chanforan. This comes as no surprise if we recall how in a letter addressed to Farel, on April 25, 1545, Calvin himself mentions drawing up a profession requested by two delegates from Provence.[7] This confession of faith was even presented to the king who, according to Calvin, was greatly angered by it. Calvin explained his reaction by claiming the Provençal envoys had given a more forceful edge to it. Beyond the 1540s, the subsequent confession originated from the other side of the Alps. The historian Pierre Gilles describes in his *Histoire Ecclésiastique des Églises Réformées* published in 1644 how, in 1556, the Piedmont Reformists drew up a "brief confession of their belief in which they declared that they believed . . ." The confession was addressed to the Parlement of Turin which had just issued a decree forbidding the reformed cult in the region of its jurisdiction. The document was organised into ten articles vindicating their orthodoxy and denouncing the errors of Roman doctrine.[8] These documents, typical of the Reformation, thus make it clear that the direction chosen at Chanforan continued to be followed, at least as far as the leaders were concerned. The Poor of Lyons were emerging from hiding and proclaiming their new faith.

Concrete signs attesting the Waldensians' adhesion to the Reformation, confirming the theoretical position adopted at Chanforan, can be found from 1555 to 1560 onwards. The communities were henceforth parishes. In 1558 for example, in reply to Henri II, king of France, who had condemned the 1556 confession, the Piedmont Reformists decided to organise themselves following the presbytero-synodal model, adopting an ecclesiastical discipline along the lines of that prescribed by the Swiss Reformed Churches. In 1559 the first national synod of the Reformed Churches of France was held in Paris. The former Waldensians who came from Provence and the Dauphiné, provinces in the kingdom, did not differ in any way from their new co-religionists. The assembly, in fact a very reduced, hardly

[7] J. Calvin, *Calvini Opera. Corpus Reformatorum*, Brunswick, 1863–1900, v. 12, n° 633.
[8] V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede dei valdesi riformati*, Torino, Claudiana, 1975, p. 153.

representative one, adopted a profession of faith and a code of discipline established on the Genevan model which would hold for all the Churches of the kingdom.[9] Furthermore, in the same year, following the treaty of Câteau-Cambrésis in which France gave up the region of Piedmont formerly under French control to the duchy of Savoy, the Piedmont Protestants sent the duke Emmanuel-Philibert an apologia and a confession, as drawn up by the Paris synod.[10] It was also in those years that the first pastors arrived, the Geneva-trained ones in particular. The various trends within French Protestantism, from the pastors and deacons to the former members of the presbyterial council and the erstwhile Poor of Lyons, made up the "remodelled churches." This was the time when the first temples were being erected. For centuries, the Poor of Lyons had required no special places of prayer. The family home, cowshed or indeed anywhere at all, had sufficed, in keeping with their clandestine practices. The first mention of such an edifice dates back to 1555 in Piedmont.[11] In Provence, the first such temple to be evoked is that in La Roque d'Anthéron in 1559.[12] The clandestine communities of the diaspora had died; the era of the parishes had begun.

New Protestants

Institutional changes came about, accompanied, preceded or perhaps followed by radical modifications in behaviour. If new institutions could perhaps be passed off as the work of active pastors and missionaries, new attitudes, which in turn gave way to new habits, emerged within the community formerly called the Poor of Lyons.

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[9] The Churches in the south of France, including the former Waldensian community, were not represented. See S. Mours, *Le protestantisme en France au XVI^e siècle*, Paris, Librairie Protestante, 1959, p. 115, referring directly to J. Aymon, *Tous les synodes natinaux des églises réformées de France*, La Haye, Delo, 1710, 3 v., v.1.

[10] V. Vinay, *op. cit.*, pp. 155–1778: Confessione di fede dei valdesi presentata ad Emanuele Filiberto (Maggio 1560).

[11] A. Armand-Hugon, "Popolo e chiesa alle Valli dal 1532 al 1561", *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi*, n. 110, December 1961, pp. 5–34, p. 17, referring to P. Gilles, *Histoire ecclésiastique des Églises vaudoises . . .*, Genève, 1644; édit. Pignerol, 1881, 2 v., v. 1, p. 83 and to S. Lentolo, *Historia delle grandi et terribili persecutioni . . .*, ed. T. Gay, Torre Pellice, Alpina, 1906, p. 78.

[12] Musée Arbaud, Aix-en-Provence, Ms MQ 18, p. 21: September 17, 1559; extract from the registers of the Parlement of Provence.

Again, notaries' registers in Provence provide the clearest indication of evolving behavioural patterns. While Catholic acts imperturbably retained the formula "Before our holy mother the Church" in marriage contracts, the inscription was reworded by the former Poor of Christ from the 1560s to become "as it is ordered", then "as God by his Holy Word has ordered" or even "in holy congregation and assembly of Christians". The traditional formula which had previously been maintained was officially rejected. A similar rupture can be traced in wills and testaments. First, they refused to make the sign of the cross which traditionally opened the testamentary proceedings. More revealing still, in notarial acts registered between 1560 and 1564, the mention "for the salvation of his soul", acknowledging the value of works and the existence of purgatory, is present in only 2% of testaments drawn up by the new reformists in the Luberon, compared to 28% of Catholics; similarly only 26% recommend the deceased to the Virgin and other saints as against 76%. From 1565, the formulas used are even more explicit, being unprecedented in the notaries' phraseology. They request burial "with no superstition as is the customary way amongst those of the Religion" or "in the manner of those of the Religion, without obsequies" or again, the testator would ask, "to be buried in the manner of the reformed religion", a precision which later became customary. The notary was thus obliged to take religious convictions into account, even if he himself was a Catholic. Indeed, the same notaries recorded Catholic and Protestant acts.

This change represented a real cultural revolution. It is no easy matter adapting ancestral habits, particularly when, as was the case in the society at the time, one should venerate one's elders and when age, experience and example were values in themselves. Yet the Poor of Lyons gradually developed into Protestants, even in their most deep-rooted manner of thinking. The example of Lourmarin is a case in point. As elsewhere, the believers became Protestants; their community became a reformed parish, the first register of baptisms to have been preserved dating back to 1563. Everyone is aware of how important the act of naming a child is, and also how the Reformation sought to mark its rupture with the past on this level too, encouraging its followers to select their descendants' Christian names from the Old Testament. Only 0.3% of names I could find from the thousands of Provençal Waldensians baptised between 1460 and 1560, (a total of 2,176 to be more precise) were Christian names

of this type, limited to Daniel, Noah and Suzanne, thus showing the notion counted little at the time. At the reformed church of Lourmarin between 1563 and 1570, however, 27% of baptised children were given Old Testament names, including eleven Daniels, eight Isaacs, four Davids, thirty nine Suzannes and seven Judiths. The onomastic evolution appears all the more abrupt if we bear in mind that none of the 772 adults—parents and godparents—choosing the names, had Old Testament names themselves. There had always been a marked tradition of passing names within a family; there was thus a real break in habits from one generation to the next.

Changes in mental habits were not just limited to the naming of children. The attitude to baptism itself evolved. The Roman Church had waged a secular campaign urging the baptism of the newly born as quickly as possible, the day after the child's birth at the latest. Congregations at large had hearkened to the message. Catholics were convinced that if their child, being tainted by original sin, should die before receiving the first sacrament, it could not be saved in the hereafter. This fear was deeply rooted in the mentality of the time. The Reformation, with its faith in predestination, dispelled the fear along with the rush to the font. The baptism ceremony, representing the child's reception into the Christian community, was to be held before the assembled congregation on a Sunday or feast-day. The parish register kept by the priest from 1553 to 1558 indicates that the Poor of Lyons living in the region of Apt shared the local Catholic mentality, taking their children to be baptised within twenty-four hours of a baby's birth in most cases, and at the latest within two days. In Lourmarin between 1563 and 1570, two thirds of the three hundred baptisms in the Protestant community were held on a Sunday. The remaining third can be explained by the troubled times which then reigned in Provence due to the wars of religion.

The behavioural changes were remarkable. The Waldensians' decision to shun the church that they had always attended to worship in the new temples and to abandon the priest in favour of the pastor was a far-reaching one indeed. Their choice touched on the very structure of the community and the mentality that had prevailed. Again, parish registers and notarial acts provide concrete evidence of such changes of direction. Two examples can illustrate the point. First, the case of Jean Roet from Lourmarin who, on April 25, 1553 in Mérindol, married Jeanne Serre from Gordes "before our holy mother the Church"; their son Joseph, however, bearing a biblical name,

was baptised on April 10, 1564 at the temple in Lourmarin. Second, the case of Jacques Michel from Apt and his wife Marguerite Bertholin. The priest from Apt baptised their son Raymond on September 15, 1557, whereas the baptism of their daughter Marie took place at the temple in Lourmarin on June 11, 1564. The question is thus settled beyond a doubt. The Poor of Lyons became fully-fledged Protestants, not just in word but also in deed.[13] In such conditions, what place did the barbes now have? What became of those who were still present in the community?

What Became of the Barbes?

Dublin University library has conserved the decisions made at Chanforan. Of course, the points that figure are those where Waldensian tradition and Reformist positions differed, and in each case, the discord was resolved in the sense of the Reformation. Of the twenty conclusions, numbered from c. 1 to c. 23, ten concern the barbes directly or indirectly. The proportion in itself, half of the issues being debated, is an indication of the role these men played in the community and a measure of the changes concerning them. The ten dispositions run as follows: auricular confession is abandoned (c. 3), no set words for prayers (c. 7), the uselessness of kneeling and removing headwear before prayers (c. 8) and the imposition of hands (c. 9), the pointlessness of set periods of fasting (c. 12), the interdict on marriage for certain categories is raised (c. 13, 14, 15); the end to preachers' itinerancy (c. 22) and the permission for everyone, ministers included, to possess goods (c. 23).[14]

It is clear that the overall theme, whose practical application was defined by each of the individual decisions, is that of salvation by faith alone; works are deemed useless. The radical changes this implied for the barbes can well be imagined. Imagination, however, is not actually required. As we know, Pierre Griot was returning from the synod when he was taken prisoner in the Provençal village of Lourmarin in October 1532. During his cross-examination on

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[13] For a closer study of these issues, see G. Audisio, *Les vaudois du Luberon, op. cit.*, in particular chapter 9, "L'épilogue: des vaudois aux protestants (1559–1562)," pp. 409–429.

[14] Dublin, Trinity College Library, Ms 259, published in langue d'oc by V. Vinay, *op. cit.*, pp. 139–143, and by G. Audisio, *Les vaudois du Luberon, op. cit.*, pp. 510–512.

November 29, he told the inquisitor of what had taken place at Chanforan: the harsh debate over faith and works, as well as dissension over vows, chastity and celibacy. A key passage, already quoted above, presents the matter from the barbes' point of view:

> Moreover, the said monks and gentlemen disputed the sacrament of marriage. And since the said barbes promised poverty, chastity and obedience to God, the said monks said they were doing wrong to promise chastity and that they should all get married for St Paul said that he who teaches must be the husband of a single wife, and the same for the deacon. And so the said barbes were all scandalised, saying that it was not their custom to get married, and the others saying they were already old.[15]

There can be no doubting the truthfulness of the statement, particularly with its endearing final touch, depicting the oldest barbes who could not sit by and hear that their vows were useless, their celibacy had been in vain and a whole life of sacrifice had been for nothing without protesting. Resistance was most certainly determined as the debates went on, for they announced a drastic, even cruel break with the whole of the Waldensian tradition.

There is no way of knowing how the propositions were finally pushed through. Pierre Griot says several times that the barbes were *all* scandalised. We know that two recalcitrant barbes who would not defer to the new law set off to Bohemia to appeal to their Brothers there; the reply they received was poised and wise, earnestly recommending caution.[16]

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[15] Pierre Griot's testimony is the only one we have evoking the decisive meeting. He was evidently overwhelmed by theological subtleties being discussed. See G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur. Procès du barbe vaudois Pierre Griot par l'inquisiteur Jean de Roma (Apt, 1532)*, Aix-en-Provence, Edisud, 1979, pp. 107–109; p. 109: "Tellement que, après les disputations faictes par les dicts religieux et gentilzhommes, les barbes demeurèrent tous escandalisés à cause que lesdicts barbes ont coustume et persuadent au peuple de ne boyre ne manger ne fère aulcune chose que premièrement ilz ne priassent Dieu. Furent aussi escandalisés à cause que les dicts religieux leur disoient qu'il ne fault point fère service à Dieu sinon du cueur et non point des membres *exteriores* car Dieu ne les demande point. Et ainsi appert que les dicts religieux vouloient fère tout le monde charnel et par tout spiritualité. Davantaige disputoyent les dicts religieux et gentilzhommes du sacrement de mariage. Et pour cause que les dicts barbes premettent à Dieu pouvreté, chasteté et obédience, les dicts religieux disoient que c'estoit mal faict à eulx de promettre chasteté et qu'ilz debvoient tous marier, car sainct Paul dict que celuy qui enseigne doit estre mary d'une seulle femme et aussi le diacre. Et par ainsi, les dicts barbes demeurèrent tous escandalisés, disans qu'ilz n'avoient pas acoustume de soy marier, et les autres disoient qu'ilz estoient desjà vieulx."

[16] For the letter and its translation into Italian, see V. Vinay, *op. cit.*, pp. 144–151.

In the end, as we know, in spite of reservations and reticence voiced at Chanforan, and notwithstanding later protests and appeals, the conclusions were confirmed the following year at the synod of Prali. The matter had been decided. It was the Waldensians themselves who brought Waldensianism to an end, and who, by embracing the Reformation, founded a new Church. Their decisions still had to be brought into effect. Would the barbes find places for themselves in the new order, or had they effectively signed their own death warrant?

New Pastors

The new wave of pastors, in the reformist model, recruited from areas under the influence of the francophone Reformation, were of Calvinist, or, to be more precise, Farelian obedience. It was not until the first "Églises dressées" that "Genevan-style" pastors first appeared.[17] As far as France was concerned, we know that the first national synod, held in Paris in 1559, established the profession of faith and the ecclesiastical discipline of the Reformed churches of the kingdom. In Piedmont, the first synod brought twenty-four pastors together in 1557, and a second was held the following year. We must follow the facts more closely if we are to find out what became of the former barbes and who the pastors of these new Reformed churches were.

A very early testimony suggests the existence of a "remodelled church" in Mérindol in Provence. The execution of the Waldensians of Provence and Comtat Venaissin took place in April 1545. Officially presented as an operation of justice, it was nothing less than a massacre.[18] In the registers of the Council of the town of Geneva, dated May 14, 1545, we find a note in the margins reading, "the Minister of Mérindol and faithful of Provence." And in the facing article, which records the Council's decision, the minister's plight is described, "who, on account of the persecution taking place in Provence, has

[17] A distinction is traditionally made between "églises plantées" meaning communities that sprang up and attempted to live out their faith according to Reformist tenets, and "églises dressées" which were organised with a proper parish structure: pastor, deacon, ancients and consistory.

[18] The court proceedings are published in full in G. Audisio, *Procès-verbal d'un massacre*, Aix-en-Provence, Edisud, 1992.

been obliged to take flight wearing but a shirt and he inspired great pity. Whereupon, it is ordered that he shall be given four ecus to buy clothes."[19]

Does this imply that Mérindol, formerly a Waldensian village in Provence, already disposed of a parish organised according to Calvin's ordinances, with a "minister" at its head? There are two different ways of interpreting the mention. It may be a real Protestant pastor, in which case the church of Mérindol was very short-lived, wiped out by the massacre; alternatively, the Genevans used their own ecclesial terminology to refer to the Provençal escapees, calling a barbe, or even a simply leader of a group of exiles a "minister". Might this mysterious "minister" be the same Jean Perrier later referred to in a letter from Viret to Calvin, who was sent as the pastor of Mérindol in 1561 at the request of the parish?[20] We should note, however, that Perrier was not of Waldensian stock, but came from Montauban in Guyenne. With the possible exception of Mérindol, there would seem to be no "Églises dressées" in Provence before 1559–1561.

Unlike the Waldensians, the Reformed communities required specific buildings where their services could be held. The first mention of a temple in Provence, already evoked in passing above, is in the complaint dated May 29, 1559 addressed to the Parlement of Provence by the lord of La Roque d'Anthéron, a village situated on the left bank of the Durance river, a good part of whose population was of Waldensian origin, from the Luberon: his subjects were in the process of "building a temple to preach the religion in the Genevan mode."[21] This was twenty-seven years after the synod of Chanforan. According to the *Histoire ecclésiastique*, there were sixty "Églises dressées" in Provence, half of which were situated in areas of the Luberon where Waldensian settlements had previously been.

In such a context, what had become of the barbes? In fact, most of them remain elusive, however meticulous our investigations, for reasons that we know only too well, among which the fact that they were often known only by their "religious" name. So what happened

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[19] State Archives of Geneva, Reg. Conseil, vol. 40, f° 114: "Lequelt, causant la persécution que ce fayct en Provence, il a esté contrain ce saulvé en chemise et qui a grand pitié en luy. Et, sur ce, ordonne que il luy soyt balhé pour ce accoustré quattre escus . . ."

[20] *Registres de la compagnie des pasteurs de Genève*, ed. J-F. Bergier, v. 2, Genève, 1964, p. 94.

[21] G. Audisio, *Les vaudois du Luberon, op. cit.*, p. 420.

to the barbes Louis and Johannet with whom Pierre Griot had travelled in the 1530s? What became of Jean, Laurent, Georges and Jehannon, whom the same witness named as being amongst the most learned? Where did Louis, Etienne, Daniel and Luc go, the four leaders of the Waldensian community in 1532? And what about Antoine Guérin, the hosier of Avignon, the former Dominican, exceptionally received as a barbe and present at the Chanforan synod, also a master of Pierre Griot? And Pierre Griot himself? He crops up sixteen years later in 1548 called as a witness in a trial for heresy, but then he disappears from sight. We do find Jean Serre, the lame man from Murs, who ran the school for barbes, who was cross-examined and imprisoned in 1539 and later died near Lucca in Italy.[22] The inventory speaks for itself: none of the previously identified barbes can be found as a pastor in one of the recently formed Protestant parishes.[23] We can surmise that a certain number of directives made at Chanforan may well have appealed to them, such as the barbes' right to marry which was henceforth established or even perhaps encouraged. A single case is cited by G. Miolo who includes in his list of barbes "Jacomin Bellonat of Angrogna, who was the first of all the barbes to get married." Nothing else is known of this barbe, and the detail added by J. Jalla is intriguing to say the least, for he notes, "The barbe Bellonat, who lived at the beginning of the sixteenth century, was to first to marry", for it is most improbable that a barbe should have been able to marry at that time as we have seen, bound as he was both by his vow of chastity and by his solemn undertaking to remain celibate. This single mention is therefore dubious, for either Bellonat, if he really existed, lived at the beginning of the sixteenth century and could not marry, or he got married and was therefore the only barbe known to us who did so, subsequent to the decisions made in Chanforan.[24]

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[22] G. Miolo, *Historia breve & vera de gl'affari de i Valdesi delle Valli*, Torino, Claudiana, 1971, p. 110: "Giovanni di Mus in Provenza il quale andando in Galabria morì per strada presso di Luca in Italia, essendo stato detenuto prigione di prima in Ais in Provenza per la Religione, ma liberato per la sola bontà di Dio" [Jean from Murs in Provence, who going to Calabria died on the way near Lucca in Italy, having been imprisoned in Aix in Provence for religion but liberated by the sole goodness of God].

[23] Further details concerning these figures can be found in the two works already quoted above, in particular in G. Audisio, *Les vaudois du Luberon, op. cit., passim.*

[24] G. Miolo, *op. cit.*, 107; J. Jalla, *Histoire des Vaudois des Alpes et de leurs colonies*, Pignerol, Imprimerie sociale, 1926, p. 65; the author gives no indication of his

In the Alps, the first mention dates from 1555, when Jean Vernon and Jean Lauvergnat wrote from the "Waldensian valleys" where they had been sent as ministers by the Genevan company of pastors. On their return, three others were sent to replace them (Vernoul, Labourier and Treigalet) in June of the same year. They were caught in Chambéry and executed. A total of fifteen ministers can be traced in the Waldensian valleys from 1555 to 1557. Who were they? They had all trained at the Academy of Lausanne, and were in contact with Viret, Bèze and Calvin. According to A. Armand-Hugon, they "ended up giving a totally reformed tone and face to the old Waldensian heresy."[25] None of the first pastors appointed to a ministry in the Waldensian valleys between 1555 and 1572 originated from the local population, with the exception of the former barbe Gilles des Gilles about known we know next to nothing. Elsewhere, in the same years, only two of the Geneva-trained ministers are from Piedmont, but from Avigliana and the Aoste valley, not from the Waldensian valleys.[26]

In Provence, the number of pastors active from 1557 to 1567 amounts to about forty. In most cases, we know them only by their patronymic; even their Christian names escape us. Of these, some were only itinerant preachers, in the early years especially, or made short stays, like Claude Boissier who spent a few months in Aix-en-Provence in 1557. Even these family names, however, are revealing. As we know, the Waldensians consciously and deliberately married amongst themselves.[27] For this reason, the range of patronyms tended to be stable rather than to expand. As a result, certain names came to be a very clear indication of Waldensian origins and identity. In

source. The other exception in this matter is the case of the barbe Martin, evoked above, who, questioned in 1492, declared his father was a barbe. This might be explained if he was a widower at the time.

[25] A. Armand-Hugon, *Popolo e chiesa . . ., op. cit.*, p. 17.

[26] Information on the pastors is found in Robert M. Kingdon, *Geneva and the coming of the Wars of Religion in France (1555–1563)*, Genève, Droz, 1956. *Id., Geneva and the Consolidation of the French Protestant Movement (1564–1572)*, Genève, Droz, 1967. Equally of interest is *Le livre du recteur de l'Académie de Genève (1559–1878)*, dir. S. Stelling-Michaud, Genève, Droz, 6 v., 1959–1980; v. 1. A. Armand-Hugon reaches the same conclusion, *op. cit.*, p. 17: "Erano infatti tutti stranieri i pastori delle Valli, salvo forse qualche superstite barbe, come il venerando Gilles des Gilles" [As a fact, the pastors of the valleys were all outsiders, with the possible exception of a surviving barbe from time to time, such as the venerable Gilles des Gilles].

[27] G. Audisio, *Une minorité en Provence, op. cit.*, pp. 110–114.

Provence, and in the Luberon more particularly, for example, the names Serre, Bourgue, Appy, Roux, Pallon, Allard, Anthouard, Barthélemy, Griot, Malan, Bret and Bonin were a clear sign of belonging to the Waldensians. The same names were just as significant in the Dauphiné Alps and Piedmont, since the Provençal Waldensians came from these Waldensian villages. And yet no first-generation Provençal pastors bears a Waldensian name, not even in the Waldensian areas of the Luberon.

We can also try to plumb the reformed parish registers. Very few have been conserved from the earliest years. The Lourmarin register, however, is still in existence. It begins in 1563 and goes through until 1639; the first pastors for this sector of the Luberon can be traced by their signatures. We find the signature of Pierre Baussan, "minister", at the bottom of certificates of baptism from 1564 to 1572, as well as Monsieur Barres, equally a "minister of the Word of the Reformed Church of Lourmarin;" or again that of Pierre Gras, deacon of the same parish. We find a "Monsieur Cassy," minister of Sivergues, and Monsieur Richard, minister of Sault.[28] In other words, we are at the heart of the Waldensian Luberon, and not a single pastor is of Waldensian stock.

Of the 88 pastors sent out on missions by the Genevan company of pastors between 1555 and 1563, two have family names that could be Waldensian: Valéri Crespin (but it might read "Graignon") and Jacques Ruffi or Roux, both present in Aix-en-Provence in 1559, but whose exact origins we do not know, and indeed whose patronyms are too common beyond the Waldensian community to be reliable markers. Meanwhile, of the thirty-one ministers sent between 1564 and 1572, the one from the Comtat Venaissin was originally from Carpentras, while the other, from Provence, came from Bargemont; neither one nor the other was of Waldensian origin. Which amounts to saying that from a total of 131 missionaries, not one can be identified with any certainty as a Waldensian.

A study bringing together all known barbes and pastors who came from Waldensian regions or who practised their ministry between 1530 and 1570, i.e. Provence, Comtat Venaissin, Dauphiné, Piedmont, Apulia and Calabria, makes a total of 137 people, of which only eight

[28] Departmental Archives of the Vaucluse, E. Lourmarin.

are former barbes, seven who are known to have been exercising between 1530 and 1539, and only one, Gilles des Gilles, whose presence is attested later, in 1555. In other words, there is not a trace to be found of our barbes at the beginning of the 1540s. They seem to have vanished from sight . . . from our sight at the very least. Furthermore, still with the same criteria, 88 pastors were traced along with 47 students of theology in Geneva, future pastors of whom only four can later be found as pastors in the period in question. None is definitely of Waldensian stock. Comparing the inventory of barbes with that of pastors shows up only one name in common: Gilles des Gilles, out of 137 individuals listed.

The appraisal is crystal-clear. Despite decisions made in Chanforan in 1532, the first Reformed ministers to arrive among the Waldensian people did not do so before 1555. For this first generation, between 1555 and 1572, we can observe both that the barbes did not become pastors and that the first pastors were not from Waldensian origins. What remains to be seen is why, if the majority of barbes gathered at Chanforan voted in favour of adhering to Reformist principles, did at least some of them, if not the majority, not become bearers of the new word? If the barbes were less favourable to the Reformation than their followers and agreed to the changes under the pressure of the Waldensian population, then why did the community at large not provide the leaders of the new Church, and send their sons occasionally to Geneva to be trained?

There is at least one partial reply to the last question, albeit in the form of a reasoned hypothesis. Might the rural character of the Waldensian community not go some way to explaining the situation? We know that the Waldensians made up an astonishingly homogeneous population in socio-professional terms, all being shepherds or labourers. We know that in the Reformed world, the first pastors were not, for the most part, from the countryside, and probably continued not to be so for a long while. Few studies have been carried out that might settle the matter, even less statistical data is available. We do know, however, that in Alsace, out of 4,902 pastors practising between 1556 and 1619, the origins are known for 997, i.e. 20%. Even when the proportion increases gradually to reach 10% in 1619, the average percentage of pastors with rural origins is 2.45%. The figure prompts B. Vogler to comment, "Peasants' sons are few in number, which can be explained by the absence of rural parish schools with

an adequate level, the high price of education, the lack of parental interest in schooling in general, and perhaps too, the lasting effect of prejudice towards the clergy."[29]

Whatever the answer, the way things happened would seem to suggest that no barbe trained in the old school had managed to renounce his past, his tradition, the profoundly anchored mind-set and lifestyle that were his and then to adhere wholeheartedly to the new system; none was so convinced that he could go out and preach honestly and convincingly, and thereby pass on the new doctrine of salvation by faith alone. It is equally possible that the stalwarts of the Reformation, particularly those in Switzerland, maintained a certain wariness of the preachers so very unlike the Reformist prototype from the Academy of Geneva. The population too, for that matter, would seem to have been reluctant to accept the new way to salvation. Was it the barbes themselves, the community as a whole or the Reformers who were reluctant or even opposed to recruiting ministers amongst the Waldensians? We shall probably never know, particularly since the three possibilities are not mutually exclusive. What we do know is that the barbes no longer existed, and with them, the epic tale of the Waldensians comes to an end too. Is there not something moving about the high point at Chanforan when the barbes decided to disappear. Were they oblivious of the consequences their decisions would entail? Or rather, were they clear-sighted to the point of accepting the repercussions of their positions, of their contradictions that had become anachronistic, their difficulties that were increasingly proving too vast to overcome? Inspired by the Gospel as they were, they perhaps recalled the admonition, "I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit;"[30] were they likewise convinced that the only possible way out for their community was to die, and thus to survive, and for themselves, to disappear altogether in the willed wreckage of medieval Waldensianism? Was this not the price to be paid, that they themselves had to pay, to reach the shores of so-called Modern Time?

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[29] B. Vogler, *La vie religieuse en pays rhénan dans la seconde moitié du XVI^e siècle (1556–1619)*, Lille, 1974, 3 vol., v. 1, p. 6.

[30] John 12, 24.

CONCLUSION

THE END OF THE PATH?

We have reached the end of our path and what will hopefully have proved a voyage of discovery in many respects. We have followed the Christian community of the Poor of Lyons, called the Waldensians, which originated from the spiritual awakening of Vaudès, when he sought merely to return to two tenets he and his companions deemed fundamental in the Christian message but which had tended to be overlooked: poverty and preaching. There was no particular obstacle to the former, for voluntary poverty had long been traditional in the Christian environment; lay preaching, on the other hand, gradually caught the attention of the ecclesiastical authorities. Their initial reaction was to enlist the preachers' support in the fight against the Cathars; this gave way to unease as the established clergy came increasingly to be the target of the preachers' criticism; a climate of hostility then settled in after the archbishop of Lyons forbade their preaching activities. Condemned as schismatic in 1184, then as heretics in 1215, the Poor of Lyons were hounded from the Church of Rome; by choosing to defy Church ordinances, they became a dissent.

From that time onwards, particularly as persecutions were stepped up from the 1230s when the Inquisition began, certain features became discernible that were to become distinct characteristics of the Waldensian community: they were dispersed across Europe, thus creating a diaspora; the originally urban fraternity became a homogeneous rural community of labourers and shepherds; from a prominent, public role of preaching they went underground, dissimulating the specific traits of their dissent until they were leading a double life; the mission to announce the Word shifted from the community as a whole to a specialised body of preachers.

While never generalised or permanent, persecution never really ceased either. Once the Waldensians had chosen to survive, rather than die as martyrs to the cause of truth, they had to adapt. One means by which they did so was to produce preachers of their own. Even this represented a compromise that risked jeopardising their entire existence: at the outset, the Poor of Lyons as a whole were by definition engaged in their preaching mission; henceforth only a small number

of them were to devote themselves to the cause. It was on these men that the authorities clearly focused their attentions. The first reason for this was that they were what were known in canon law as the "heresiarchs", the leaders of the heresy, who as such deserved death in the eyes of the law; furthermore, the hierarchical principles that structured the whole of society in those times held that to eliminate the leaders or key figures amounted, in the long run at any rate, to wiping out the dissent itself.[1]

For these reasons, the barbes were tracked down with tenacity, traces of which can be found, for instance, in the report addressed by the king's commissaries to François I in 1533. Among the recommendations they make, we find the following comment concerning the lords of justice: "May they take care that the said barbes do not preach, and if these barbes are caught, let them be punished and executed as heretics showing them no pity, for the evil springs from them."[2] Some years later, on the other side of the Alps, we find the Archbishop of Turin expressing a similar opinion after his visit to the Waldensian valleys in 1545: "It should not be admitted that preachers, be it in public or in private, discuss the faith, without licence from the archbishop." He ordered that they be denounced, on pain of excommunication.[3] Such recommendations were duly put into practice, with barbes being arrested and cross-examined such as those we have encountered here: the barbes Martin and Pierre in 1492, Pierre Griot in 1532, and another whose name is not given, equally interrogated by Jean de Roma, then Jean Serre in 1539 . . .

One dramatic consequence, however, of the barbes' clandestine mission, and the painstaking means by which they dissimulated their missionary rounds and their arrival in Waldensian localities and homes where the nocturnal meetings could be organised, was that to be captured, they had to be denounced. Despite their various safeguards, they did not always escape the attention of the curious, or the ill-disposed, and in the case of the latter, there was always the risk of a denunciation to the authorities. This was doubtless what

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[1] See above, chapter 3, notes 5 and 6.

[2] Paris, National Archives, J 851, n. 2, f° 165: "Qu'ils ayent à eulx donner garde desdits barbes s'ilz viendront point prescher et si iceulx barbes sont prins qu'ilz soyent puniz et exéquutéz comme hérétiques sans avoir rémission d'eulx car d'eulx viennent tous les maulx."

[3] Torino, archivio arcivescovile, visite pastorali, n. 1, fasc. 1: "Predicatores aliquos non admitterent tam in publico quam in privatis nec alios disputantes de fide admitterent sine licentia archiepiscopali"; see A. Pacal, "Comunità eretiche e chiese cattoliche nelle valli valdesi . . .", *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi*, n. 30, 1912, pp. 61–73.

prompted Pierre Griot's arrest in Lourmarin, unless it was a Waldensian, tempted by the promise of material gain of some sort for denouncing a barbe. The risk of betrayal was real enough, as Georges Morel himself makes clear in his 1530 report, when he puts the following question, the fourth in the series, to Oecolampadius:

> Are we allowed to advise our little community to put to death the false friends and traitors encountered quite often among the said people, since we dispose of no temporal authority which permits us to punish such traitors? It does indeed happen, amongst the people themselves, as you can understand, that false friends are to be found who will go in secret to the members of the Antichrist, for example the monks, bishops, temporal authorities and others of this sort, saying to them, "How much will you give us and we shall deliver into your hands the Waldensian doctors? We know where they hide." We dare not in effect show ourselves in public where ever we go. When they have agreements of the sort, the said members come by night with a troop of armed men to take us, often without anyone knowing anything about it: which means that our people meet with grievous persecution and we, sorrowful ones, we are most often burnt . . .[4]

Denunciation and treason were not just hypothetical, theoretical dangers; they were real, concrete risks. We can take Morel at his word, for he must have been troubled to ask such a question when, faithful as they were to the biblical command, "Thou shalt not kill", the Waldensians were opposed to the death penalty.

It was not persecution, however, that finally got the better of the barbes, or indeed of the Waldensian community at large, as we have seen. Nor was it the Waldensians who finally did away with the company of barbes. After all, facing up to the changes taking place during the sixteenth century, it would have been understandable had the community opted once more to change the way it was organised, deciding that the barbes were obsolete. This is not the way things happened. On the contrary, the high esteem in which the followers

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[4] V. Vinay, *Le confessioni di fede dei valdesi riformati*, Torino, Claudiana, 1975, p. 44: "An liceat nobis, plebeculae nostrae consulere, interficiant falsos fratres proditores, qui inter dictam plebeculam saepicule pullulant, cum in huiusmodi non habeamus ullo modo, qua puniantur tales proditores, ditionem temporalem. Exoriuntur enim, ut rem sane intelligas, inter dictam plebiculam falsi fratres, qui clam accedunt ad antichristi membra, ut puta monachos, episcopos ditionem temporalem et huiusmodi, dicentes: 'Quantum vultis nobis dare, et in manus vestras waldensium doctores trademus; scimus enim, ubi lateant' (non quidem ubique palam apparere audemus). Et sic inter eos conventione facta, praedicta membra tempore nocturno veniunt cum manu armata ad nos capiendum, saepe nemine sciente, quo fit, ut ex hoc plaebiculae nostrae gravis exoriatur persecutio et nos miseri plerunque uramur . . ."

held their preachers is amply documented, and even in the daunting context of the tribunals, the community continued to sing their praises, even in peril of their lives.

As a fact, the special place accorded to the barbes by their people still rings true in the names or attributes they were given, not only by the community but even by those pursuing them. First, we can trace the name as given by the barbes themselves. Turin Raymond, of Freissinières, declared in 1488, "The barbes said they were the Poor of Christ." Pierre Pellegrin, from the same village, announced likewise, "The barbes called themselves the Poor of Christ." In the same vein, Antoine Porte from L'Argentière said of the two men who had come to his father's house twelve years before, "They asked if he wished to sell them a mule; then they asked him if he wanted to enter their sect and confess because they were the Poor of Christ going through the world, in imitation of the apostles."[5] Simon Guicaci of Pragelato valley had spoken similarly the year before. Asked, "what did the barbes say?" he answered, "That they are the imitators of the apostles and are called the Poor of Christ."[6]

It would appear, however, that the suspect is not merely reporting the name by which the barbes went, but is also giving the term used by the followers. Three suspects from the Dauphiné, all women from L'Argentière, affirm that, "the barbe was from the Poor of Christ, going through the world imitating the apostles."[7] Forty years later, in Provence this time, Pierre Griot answered the inquisitor's question, "Who are the Poor of Lyons?" in very clear terms: "They are the barbes who go out preaching the Waldensians' sect."[8] Evidently, the name by which the barbes were known, both amongst themselves and amongst the community, was "the Poor of Christ" or "the Poor of Lyons;" three or four centuries after they first came into existence, the name adopted at the very beginning was still very much in use. A remarkable shift in usage, however, had come about; while in the first period of their history, it was the name by which the Waldensians spoke of themselves, by the end of their saga, it applied only to the preachers.

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[5] Departmental Archives, Isère, B 4351, ff° 214, April 20, 1488; 166 v°, April 9, 1488 and 325 v°, April 28, 1488.

[6] *Ibid.*, B 4350, f° 139, November 17, 1487.

[7] *Ibid.*, f° 327 v°: Agnès, aged 40, April 28, 1488; f° 330: Jenturia, aged 22, April 28, 1488; f° 343: Delphine, aged 20, April 29, 1488.

[8] G. Audisio, *Le barbe et l'inquisiteur. Procès du barbe vaudois Pierre Griot par l'inquisiteur Jean de Roma (Apt, 1532)*, Aix-en-Provence, Edisud, 1979, p. 179.

Compared to their predecessors, the barbes, by reason of their role as guardians and leaders of the community, would seem to have acquired particular importance in the community from the point of view not only of their believers, but also of those who were tracking down heretics. The inquisitor Jean de Roma thus referred to the Waldensians in 1532 as "the sect of the barbes."[9] We can indeed wonder whether the evolution of the community once legal proceedings were launched in the thirteenth century had not resulted in the barbes bearing by themselves what had been the lot of all the Poor of Lyons at the beginning. What characterised Vaudès and his companions in the early days was that they were men and women preachers, living as beggars, refusing oaths and purgatory. We have seen that, to survive, the Waldensians had to make certain concessions: they concealed their dissent and so ceased to preach; they became peasants and landowners, some of them, as I have been able to establish concerning Provence in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, becoming extremely wealthy; to blend with their times, they took oaths and ordered mass for the souls of those in purgatory . . .

The barbes, on the contrary, remained true to the ideals of Vaudès: poor men, beggars, preachers, itinerants. As a male company, embracing celibacy, their way of life even came to resemble traditional monkhood, particularly with the three vows they made promising chastity, poverty and obedience, and their respect of the canonical hours. In such conditions, there is nothing outlandish about thinking that in practical terms, they ended up embodying the quintessence of Waldensianism, albeit without deliberately deciding to do so, thereby making up for their followers' lapses and waywardness when they quite simply could not keep up with Waldensian strictures. Could we go as far as suggesting that, by instinct no doubt, they came to form a sort of guarantee, almost an alibi for the other Waldensians, conscious and doubtless ashamed that they did not live in keeping with the principles they continued to defend? Might this not in fact have been the solution they reached to prevent the community, trapped as it was between theory and practice, gradually slipping as the years went by into a form of collective schizophrenia?

Whatever the case, it is clear that by the time of the Reformation, when compromises were no longer the order of the day, the Waldensian position was challenged by the new word and could no longer keep

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

abreast. The Poor of Lyons were confronted with the need to choose, once and for all, something they had managed to avoid for centuries. The very grounding of their existence was thrown into question, shaking up the community and particularly the barbes, who in institutional terms had to sign their own death warrant. In other words, the Waldensian dissent was not eliminated by its persecutors, nor did the followers put an end to the barbes; it was the barbes themselves who decided, by adopting the Reformation, to bring Waldensianism to a close, and in so doing, to put an end to their own role. When they chose their new bearings at Chanforan, were they fully conscious of what they were doing? In the absence of any testimonies giving insights into the question, how can we know?

The memory of these men, however, did not fade so easily. The term "barbe" continued to be used, in one form or another, although not always in the most appropriate of ways. Jacques Aubéry, for instance, speaking as King's Counsel in 1551, evokes the testimony of Pierre Johannis, lieutenant of the judge of Aix-en-Provence. Johannis had reported on the Waldensian village of Mérindol, saying, "he has heard that every day the Lutheran sect is preached in the church of the said place, with munitions of arms for the preachers who come from Geneva and who are called barbes."[10] The witness is completely muddled, mistaking Waldensians, Lutherans and Calvinists, for we know without a doubt that barbes were not trained in Geneva; what is more, in the era up to and including 1545, the date given for the incident, Geneva had not begun training pastors to be sent on foreign missions.

Memories of the barbes persisted into the following century. P. Gilles, for example, a pastor of Waldensian origin, wrote of the barbes as follows in his work published in 1644: "On account of this name, Papists in Piedmont commonly referred to those who took the barbes for pastors as "barbets."[11] It is possible, however, that he is speaking of a more distant epoch, in which case the term "pastor" is used in the more general sense to mean one of the leaders of the community. Later in the same century, the same sobriquet is cited in the Moreri dictionary: "Present-day Waldensians, known as Barbets, do not derive

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[10] J. Aubéry, *Histoire de l'exécution de Cabrières et de Mérindol . . .*, Paris, Cramoisy, 1645, p. 55; reed. G. Audisio, Mérindol, A.E.V.H.L., 1982; *Id.*, Paris, Les éditions de Paris, 1995.

[11] P. Gilles, *Histoire ecclésiastique des Églises vaudoises . . .*, Genève, 1644; édit. Pignerol, 1881, 2 v., v. 1, p. 17.

from those of old & should be seen but as sectaries of Calvin."[12] Finally, when in 1685 the Edict of Nantes was revoked, forbidding Protestantism in the kingdom of France and forcing pastors to go into exile, one testimony speaks out proving that the memory of the barbes was still as vivid for certain French Reformers. A considerable number of pastors applied to Ruvigny, Deputy-General of the Reformed Churches appointed to the king, asking for their duties to be suspended. Realising that the fateful hour was approaching, they sought permission to leave with their families before it was too late:

> They called themselves Barbes so as not to be known in that place by their ordinary name of ministers, which could no longer be suffered. There was nothing at that time more glorious than the court, and nothing more sorrowful than the Barbes. Ambassadors were being greeted, ballets performed on the ruin of heresy, while the Barbes ambled in the courtyards, disguised and as uncavalierly dressed as gentlemen *de robe* and with a less than cleanly air about them.[13]

The testimony is of particular interest, considering that the author clearly does not know the origin of the nickname being assumed by the pastors. At the same time, it shows that a memory of the barbes was still present, even if most people no longer knew what it meant. And indeed even to this day, in Piedmont, as in the seventeenth century, Catholics still refer familiarly to the Protestant descendants of the Waldensians using the sobriquet derived from the barbes. I can cite one instance I myself encountered, as both relatively recent and reliable proof. In 1972, I wrote to the director of the archives in the Aoste valley in Italy, inquiring whether, in the stacks, there might be archive material liable to fit in with my research on the Waldensians. In his cordial, detailed reply, he mentioned in passing, and without any pejorative intent, that "The volumes of deliberations for the town of Aoste. . . . are the only sources likely to provide data on the relations between our duchy and the 'barbets,' " putting the term in

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[12] L. Moreri, *Le grand dictionnaire historique* . . ., Lyon, 1674; edit. Paris, Mariette, 1704, 4 v., v. IV, p. 840.

[13] Report by the President, baron F. de Schikler, *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français*, v. 52 (1903), pp. 301–302: "Ils s'appelaient Barbes pour n'être point reconnus en ce lieu-là sous leur nom ordinaire de ministres qui désormais ne s'y pouvait plus souffrir. Rien alors de plus magnifique que la cour, rien de plus désolé que les Barbes. On y recevait des ambassadeurs, on y donnait des ballets sur la ruine de l'hérésie, tandis que les Barbes rodaient dans les cours, déguisés et aussi mal cavalièrement habillés que des gens de robe et alors peu en humeur de propreté."

inverted commas all the same. The fact in itself, with the term being used and kept alive by the present-day descendants of their "enemies" of yore, thus speaks in remembrance of a group who, more than four hundred years ago, chose to disappear, perhaps out of necessity, but assuredly with their full consent.

It thus becomes clear that the long adventure of the barbes, a saga with epic overtones despite its rural characters and setting, still echoes on in the collective memory to this day. It would be vain, however, to attempt to trace some other form of heritage in the present-day "Chiesa Valdese" in Piedmont other than as a memory, an ardently maintained one at that, for example by the laudable efforts of the active and helpful Società di Studi Valdesi. The medieval Waldensian community was transformed into a Reformed Church, giving up the principal characteristics that had made its religious originality. If the Waldensians thus became Protestants, the same analogical shift cannot, strictly speaking, be applied to the barbes; the barbes did not become pastors and, as far as the first generation was concerned at any rate, the new pastors were not Waldensians. Yet another means by which to measure the change brought about at Chanforan, should it still be needed in corroboration, is that, on a religious level, the Chiesa Valdese, whatever its name might suggest, does not follow in the wake of the Waldensian dissent, even if it is clearly named after the former Waldensians who converted to the Reformation, creating as they did so what was for a very long time the only Reformist community on Italian soil. Within the present-day Reformed Waldensian community, however, what trace remains of those barbes who, for a century at least, left so great a mark on the dissent of the Poor of Lyons? Is this not a fine but sobering example to dwell on of the strengths and weaknesses of memory and remembrance, of continuity and severance?

La novella [ley] di: "Perdona a tota gent,
E trobares perdon del Paire omnipotent;
Car si tu non perdonas, non aures salvament."
Neun non deo aucir ni irar neuna gent;
Manc ni simple ni paure non deven scarnir,
Ni tenir vil l'estrang que ven d'autrui pais,
Car en aquest mont nos sen tuit pelegrin.
La Nobla Leyczon, 257–263.

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